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# DIPLOMARBEIT

Titel der Diplomarbeit

**Intertextuality and Parody -  
In the wake of Francis Ford Coppola's  
*The Godfather***

Verfasser

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angestrebter akademischer Grad

**Magister der Philosophie (Mag. phil.)**

Wien, 2011	
Studienkennzahl lt. Studienblatt:	<b>A 343</b>
Studienrichtung lt. Studienblatt:	<b>Anglistik und Amerikanistik</b>
Betreuerin / Betreuer:	<b>ao. Univ. Prof. Dr. Monika Seidl</b>



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## 1. Introduction

The following paper is more than just a scholarly thesis. On one level it is the result of its author's lifelong compulsive obsession with movies and TV-shows. Furthermore it is an attempt to make use of all the knowledge concerning movies and TV-shows collected over the years and to analyze and to express this knowledge with the help of the work of language- and literary scholars such as Ferdinand de Saussure, Michael Bakhtin, Julia Kristeva and Gerard Genette. It took endless hours in cinemas, in front of the television, in internet-forums; and countless reviews, blogs, and discussion boards were read to collect all the important and also the allegedly information forming the practical basis to write such a diploma thesis.

To get a first, brief impression on what this paper is about, ask yourself the following questions: Have you ever had a *déjà-vu* moment while watching a movie or a TV-show? Did a dialogue, a punch line, a tune, or an entire scene ever remind you of something you might have heard or seen on screen before? If so, then you may draw two conclusions out of it; you have watched other movies and TV-shows before and you can recall certain aspects like dialogues, characters, the music or scenes of these movies and TV-shows when confronted with allusions referring to them in other movies and TV-shows. As you may notice some pages later, the preceding sentence is, in a nutshell, a slightly modified version of the quintessence of Julia Kristeva's theory of intertextuality. The theoretical part of this thesis provides the basis for the practical part, which, as mentioned above, deals with references and allusions in contemporary US-American TV-shows on two different levels. The collected references and allusions are classified according to Gerard

Genette's theory of transtextuality. He mentions five different types of transtextual references and those are explained with practical examples. The second level concerning the practical part focuses on Dan Harries' parodic methods. Here, the practical examples are categorized according to these different methods. It is important to be aware of the fact that all the different theories dealing with the topic of intertextuality do not have a common concept so far. In the introduction to her work "Intermedialität", Rajewsky criticizes, that over the last two decades, when intertextuality gained attention within media studies, a lot of different terms, such as multimediality, poly- or plurimediality, transmediality, or media change were used to describe the theoretical concept. The first part of this thesis also provides a brief overview of the most notable of those theories. Another focus of the theoretical part lies on parody and its definition, as most of the analyzed examples are in fact more or less humorous references to the target text.

This target text, the source for all the references taken from contemporary American TV-shows this diploma thesis examines, is Francis Ford Coppola's movie *The Godfather*. Directed in 1972, it is still one of the most successful movies in film history in terms of inflationary-adjusted box office scores, according to *boxofficemojo.com*. Right after its release it turned into an instant classic and is now mentioned in the same breath with other cinematic milestones such as *Gone With The Wind*, *Star Wars*, *Titanic*, and *Avatar*. It is just the author's assumption based on experience, that *The Godfather*, together with *Star Wars*, is the most referred to, spoofed, parodied, and paid homage to movie of all times. Planting such allusions, be it as homage to a movie, actor or director, or as funny persiflage, is a very common practice among many screenwriters and directors. All the examples presented in the practical part are taken from contemporary US-

American TV-shows. As already mentioned, it was a long process to find enough references to write a whole diploma thesis about them. The list of TV-shows containing references to *The Godfather* is a long one and the shows are such diverse ones as *The Simpsons*, *The Gilmore Girls*, *Boardwalk Empire*, and *Star Trek*. Despite the huge variety of the TV-shows, the scenes from *The Godfather* referred to remain the same, and the way they are presented in the TV-shows is also a rather similar one. The following chapter offers a brief introduction on the history of intertextuality and points out its significance for this thesis.





## 2. Theoretical Points

### 2.1. The origins and the development of intertextuality

In general, it can be claimed that the basic concept of intertextuality exists as long as written text. According to Worton and Still's general definition, intertextuality "[...] insists that a text [...] cannot exist as a hermetic or self-sufficient whole, and so does not function as a closed system" (1).

This is the main statement of the theory of intertextuality. During the process of writing writers and readers of texts are constantly influenced by preceding readings. Someone writing a text has read texts before, and therefore the written text is inevitably shot through with references, quotations, and other influences. On the other hand, someone who reads a text might be, as a result of previously read texts, able to identify those references and quotations. If they remain unnoticed, the reader might still interpret them due to his or her background knowledge. In other words, everyone who writes a text has read a text before, and everyone who reads a text has read a text before. This is also true for the topic of this thesis. Everyone who watches a movie or a TV-show has seen movies and TV-shows before, and everyone who directs or writes a screenplay for a movie or a TV-show has seen a movie or a TV-show before. Therefore it is also inevitable that a movie or a TV-show presents references to other movies and TV-shows. The large number of on-screen allusions and references to *The Godfather* and repetitive patterns suggest that almost all the references found in other movies and TV-shows, are intentional ones, which means that the directors, the screenwriters,

and the actors are well aware of what they are doing and what or whom they are referring to.

The basic concept of intertextuality, as Worton and Still claim (2), can be traced back to ancient Greek and Roman writers, but it took a long time until the studies of literature and linguistics slowly started to approach it. In 1915 the Swiss writer, linguist, and philosopher Ferdinand de Saussure published his work *Course In General Linguistics*. Until today his work is considered to be the major influence on linguistics and semiotics, and basically every work done in those scientific fields is based on his ideas. The central notion of *Course In General Linguistics* is, that any language can be analyzed as a formal system consisting of different elements. At the core of this notion lies the theory of the linguistic sign. Saussure (66) claims, that this linguistic sign has two sides to look upon; namely the concept of the sign, what he calls *signified*, and the sound-image of the sign, the *signifier*. For him, “a sign is not only a word’s reference to some object in the world but the combination between a *signifier* and a *signified*” (66). To fully understand the sign, it requires the reader or listener of a word or a sentence to be familiar with both, the sound-image and the concept. The further definition of this concept is, “that any writer or speaker creates specific acts of linguistic communication out of the available synchronic system of language” (66). Saussure (66) calls the acts of linguistic communication *parole* and the system of language *langue*. Barthes further clarified the idea of *la langue*, claiming “that it is the social part of language and the individual cannot himself either create or modify it; it is essentially a collective constraint that one must accept in its entirety in order to communicate” (82). This very basic concept of communication was crucial for the development of the theories on intertextuality.

### **2.1.1. *Intertextuality***

While intertextuality was born as a term around the same time as postmodernism, and hence is often seen as belonging to the same theoretical cohort, its presence throughout world literature makes it a considerable older process. (Gray 5)

It was not until the late 1960s when scientists started some serious work on the concept of intertextuality. In 1969, the Bulgarian theorist Julia Kristeva published her fundamental essay “Word, Dialogue and Novel”. In this essay she did two important things; she coined the term intertextuality and she introduced the writings of the Russian philosopher, literary critic, and semiotician Mikhail Bakhtin to a Western audience. Until Julia Kristeva rediscovered Mikhail Bakhtin, his work was hardly known, even among literary theorists, and many of his articles and books had not even been published.

In contrast to Saussure, Bakhtin’s work focused more on the human-centered and socially specific aspect of language. Voloshinov, a fellow scholar of Bakhtin says, that “meaning is unique, to that extent that it belongs to the linguistic interaction of specific individuals or groups within multiple specific social contexts” (60ff). Bakhtin key criticism of Saussure was, that he lost sight of the social specificity of language and formed it into something as abstract as a lexicon or dictionary. Voloshinov, pinpoints Bakhtin’s view of language, that it “[...] acquires life and historically evolves [...] in concrete verbal communication, and not in the abstract linguistic system of language, nor in the individual psyche of speakers” (62).

The most important theory influencing the development of intertextuality was Bakhtin's theory of dialogism. The quintessence of dialogism is, that all language appears dialogic. Morson and Emerson explain in a rather poetic expression that "Bakhtin envisages all of life as an ongoing, unfinalizable dialogue, which takes place at every moment of daily existence" (59). Dialogism is therefore defined as the necessary relation of any utterance to other utterances.

Stam, Burgoyne and Flitterman-Lewis mention, that "Bakhtin criticizes the self-set limitation of the literary scholar-critic's interest exclusively to literary series. Dialogism, to Bakhtin, operates within all cultural production, whether literate or non-literate, verbal or non-verbal, highbrow or lowbrow" (205).

Based on Saussure's earlier mentioned *Semiotics* and Bakhtin's *Dialogism*, Julia Kristeva tried to come up with a new approach, synchronizing both preceding theories. For Kristeva, "the notion of intertextuality replaces the notion of intersubjectivity" when we realize that meaning is not transferred directly from writer to reader but instead is mediated through, or filtered by, "codes imparted to the writer and reader by other texts" (37). That means that all information, collected via reading, watching movies, and discussions with other people is responsible for how the individual meaning of a specific text, while being exposed to it, is created. Regarding this thesis, it is therefore important to be aware of the target text, *The Godfather*, to create the meaning intended by the directors and screenwriters of the TV-shows.

### 2.1.2. *Transtextuality*

In 1982, the French literary theorist Gérard Genette published his work *Palimpsestes: La littérature au second degré*, in which he presents an approach to improve and specify Julia Kristeva's theory of intertextuality. He divides intertextuality, or transtextuality as he calls it, into five subcategories, that have all the same basis, namely the relationship between texts, but which are slightly different regarding this relationship. Those five categories are **intertextuality**, **paratextuality**, **metatextuality**, **architextuality** and **hypertextuality**. To demonstrate these five categories, Genette not only focuses on literature texts from the 20<sup>th</sup> century but also uses examples covering almost the entire history of literature from the ancient Greek and Roman times until the twentieth century. Even though his work covers a wide historical era, *Palimpsestes* cannot be seen as a history of inter- or transtextuality. The used texts merely serve to point out the differences of the five categories and to exemplify transtextuality. At the time he wrote and published his work, movies and TV-Shows had already been a global phenomenon for several decades, but Genette's focus to frame his theory is on literary texts only.

Genette defines transtextuality as "all that sets the text in a relationship, whether obvious or concealed, with other texts" (1). In the first chapter of *Palimpsestes* (1ff) he (contemptuously or not) mentions Julia Kristeva's theory of intertextuality as only one part of the five different types of transtextual relationships. Being, in his opinion, only a part of a bigger picture, Genette (1ff) defines **intertextuality** as the relationship of co-presence between two texts or among several texts. This co-presence can occur in various ways. On the one hand it often happens in the form

of quoting, when the source text is significantly mentioned. On the other hand as plagiarism which is an undeclared but still literal borrowing. Another form of **intertextuality** is the allusion. This is a reference to another text with or without mentioning it, “[...] whose full meaning presupposes the perception of a relationship between it and another text, to which it necessarily refers by some inflections that would otherwise remain unintelligible” (2). Most of the references to *The Godfather* in TV-shows do not mention the target text as their source, which can be seen in the practical part. Basically, all the analyzed references in the practical part can be seen as **intertextuality** according to Genette’s rather loose definition, as they are all quotations, plagiarisms, and allusions in the broadest sense. Another problem with Genette’s theory lies in the fact that references concerning movies in TV-shows do not happen on the textual level alone. Those references do not only comprehend the dialogues but also scenes, the shooting style and camera angles, the settings, costumes, the music, and many other given factors are not present in written text. One has to bear in mind the three different levels, mentioned by Harries (17), of lexicon (sets, characters, costumes, iconography), syntax (narrative development, temporal progression of the plot) and style (visual technique, sound, titles) in which the references discussed in that paper can occur.

Furthermore, in their work *New Vocabularies in Film Semiotics: Structuralism, Post-Structuralism and Beyond* Stam, Burgoyne and Flitterman-Lewis (211) criticize Genette’s classification and call his categories “highly suggestive” and claimed that those categories tempt scholars to coin additional terms within the same paradigm. Based on said claim, they come up with five subcategories to Genette’s own first subcategory **intertextuality**.

Their first subcategory is called **Celebrity Intertextuality**. The authors claim that the presence of a movie or television star in a movie or a TV-show can evoke a genre or cultural milieu (212). Concerning *The Godfather*, there are a couple of examples for such **Celebrity Intertextuality**. The animated movie *Shark Tale* (2004) tells the story of the vegetarian shark Oscar, whose father Don Lino is the boss of a criminal shark organization. Robert De Niro, who plays Michael Corleone in *The Godfather*, lends his voice to the character of Don Lino, and thereby evokes parallels to *The Godfather* and the genre of gangster movies. Furthermore, the presence of the voices of the actors Michael Imperioli and Vincent Pasore, who both are among the regular cast of *The Sopranos*, emphasizes this evoked cultural milieu of gangster movies. Another example for **Celebrity Intertextuality** is the character of Fat Tony in *The Simpsons*. Fat Tony is the head of organized crime in Springfield. He occurs on the TV-show on a regular basis. The actor who lends his voice to Fat Tony is Joe Mantegna, who is probably best known for his role as Joey Zasa in *The Godfather III*.

The next subcategory of Stam, Burgoyne and Flitterman-Lewis is called **Genetic Intertextuality** (212). According to them the appearance of a son or a daughter of well-known actress or actor, can evoke the memory of their famous parents. The best example for **Genetic Intertextuality** concerning *The Godfather* is Sophia Coppola. She is the daughter of Francis Ford Coppola, the director of *The Godfather*, who also started a career as a director. It is the author's opinion, that especially at the beginning of her career she was never mentioned without a comparison to her father. **Intratextuality**, the third subcategory would refer to the process by which films refer to themselves through mirroring, microcosmic and mise-en-abyme structures (212). **Auto-Citation** refers to an author's self-

quotation. Francis Ford Coppola does so in *The Godfather II* by mentioning events from the first part. **Mendacious Intertextuality** is the last category presented by Stam, Burgoyne and Flitterman-Lewis (212) but - as it is of no importance for this thesis - it will not be discussed in detail.

Genette's second subcategory presented in *Palimpsestes* (3), **paratextuality**, includes the less explicit and more distant relationship of a text. According to him, the "paratext surrounds the main body of a text" (3). This paratext can have various forms. It can be a title, a subtitle, intertitles, prefaces, postfaces, notices, forewords; marginal, infrapaginal, and terminal notes; epigraphs; illustrations; blurbs, book covers, dust jackets, and many other kinds of secondary signals, whether allographic or autographic (3). Regarding a movie the paratext can also include film posters, trailers, the merchandise and reviews. The following three figures show examples of parodic paratextuality concerning a famous film poster and the original title font of *The Godfather*. Figure 1 presents the original. It shows the main male character Don Vito Corleone, played by Marlon Brando, and the original title font together with the illustration of a puppeteer's hand holding a crossbar, which is the visual part of the original title font. Figures 2 and 3 show slightly modified versions of the original. The first paratextual figure shows US president Barack Obama instead of Vito Corleone and the title is changed to "The Soulbrotha" which is, according to *thefreedictionary.com*, a synonym for a fellow black man. One can only speculate about the intentions of this paratextuality and why its creator attempts to compare US President Barack Obama to the head of a criminal organization. The second paratextual figure is a combination of two very successful film series, *The Godfather* and the *Star Wars* Saga. The head of Darth



Vader, one of the most prominent villains in movie history, here replaces the head of Vito Corleone and the title now reads “GodVader” instead of “Godfather”.



Figure 1

Figure 2

Figure 3

**Architextuality** means “the designation of a text as part of a genre or multiple genres through various defining signs” (4). Genette further claims, that “the text designates itself to one or more genres, but this could also be applied to its framing by readers” (4). The source text for this thesis, *The Godfather*, can be seen as architextual as it designates itself as part of the gangster-movie genre. The defining signs could not be more obvious as the plot of the movie describes the life of a Sicilian family in the United States who makes its living with organized crime. That the criminal family members are portrait as protagonists rather than antagonists in the story was new in movie history. Another example for **architextuality** related to *The Godfather* is the movie parody *Mafia! The Comedy You Can't Refuse!* from 1998 the major target of which it is to spoof *The Godfather* among many other movies and the whole gangster movie genre. All kinds of stereotypes, a lot of them caused by *The Godfather* and other movies dealing with organized crime in the United States such as *Goodfellas* or *Casino*, are present in *Mafia!* and are parodied on various levels.

**Metatextuality** is, according to Genette, the relationship most often labeled “commentary, and it unites a source text to another, without necessarily citing it, in fact sometimes without naming it” (4). One can also say that **metatextuality** is an explicit or implicit critical commentary of one text on another text. An example concerning *The Godfather* can be found in the following quote taken from *The Sopranos*, Season 1, Episode 10:

Massive: “You people are all right. Godfather. I’ve seen that movie 200 times. Godfather II was definitely the shit. The third one, a lot of people didn’t like it, but I think it was just misunderstood.” (8:40)

The speaker addresses a member of the Soprano family who is known to be involved with organized crime in New Jersey. On the one hand the speaker projects the stereotypes of the movie onto the Sopranos by assuming that they are like the Corleone family in the movie. On the other hand he mentions the third part of *The Godfather* and the harsh criticism after its release. *The Godfather III* never achieved becoming such a milestone as the first two parts. For example, Hal Hinson from *The Washington Post* claims, that the movie “isn't just a disappointment, it's a failure of heartbreaking proportions” (1990). Massive refers to this bad perception of the movie in his second sentence, suggesting that he liked and understood it. In this instance of **metatextuality** the source text is mentioned by name. Another example for **metatextuality** is taken from *The Simpsons*, Season 14, Episode 22. Towards the end of the episode the character of Fat Tony says: “I haven’t cried like this since I paid to see *The Godfather III*” (19:51). Here, the criticism towards the third part of *The Godfather* saga is the

same as in the example given above, namely that it has never reached the quality and the epic status of the first two parts at all.

**Hypertextuality**, Genette's last subcategory, describes the relation between any text and a preceding hypotext (5), which is in the case of this thesis *The Godfather*. The hypertext, here the references in TV-shows, is based on a text or genre which "[i]t transforms, modifies, elaborates, or extends. This transformation is done through the means of parody, spoof, sequel, and translation" (5). Genette's category of **hypertextuality** is therefore probably the most important category for this thesis, as the vast majority of analyzed references occur in the form of spoofs and parodies.

## 2.2. Defining Parody

Another important focus this thesis looks upon is the way parody is produced and how it happens in TV shows and movies. In their references to the source text, Francis Ford Coppola's *The Godfather*, a large number of the analyzed scenes and dialogues from TV shows are defined as parodic ones.

Nil Korkut calls parody "[...] a highly ambiguous literary form that has manifested itself throughout history with widely varying features, intentions, and functions" (11). She further claims that

[t]he devices parody employs are also of a highly varying nature. Sometimes irony and sometimes comedy created through exaggeration, understatement, or incongruity may be the devices parody heavily relies on.

At other instances the emphasis of parody may be on breaking the illusion created by the target text through the use of metafictional strategies. The relationship between parody and its target is never of a uniform and easily definable nature, either. Parody's attitude towards its target is often ambivalent and may range from degradation and mockery to respectful admiration. (11)

Rose (5), among many others, claims that the origins of parody can be traced back to ancient Greek poetry. Back then the Greek word *parodia*, consisting of the prefix *para* (*against* or *beside*) and the word *ode* (which means *song*), referred to a narrative poem that imitated the style and prosody of epics, but which rather dealt with satirical or mock-heroic subjects than with serious and heroic ones. According to Genette (10), it was Aristotle's claim in his work *Poetics*, that Hegemon of Thasos invented this kind of parody. Roman writers who further developed the praxis of parody also pointed out that the intended imitation of one poet by another one for humorous effect is the key element of parody.

Many famous authors throughout the history of western literature published parodies beside their serious works,. Among those authors are such famous names as Geoffrey Chaucer, Miguel Cervantes, Jonathan Swift, Alexander Pope, and Jane Austen.

Due to the fact that parody has such a long history, Korkut (20) concludes that "it is almost impossible to come up with a fully satisfactory, comprehensive definition of parody". In her work *Parody: ancient, modern and post-modern* Margaret A. Rose (280ff) mentions more than twenty different definitions and uses of the term

parody from ancient Greek to modern, late modern and post-modern theorists. Among those are very prominent names. Ben Johnson, the British playwright calls it “the imitation of verses which makes them more absurd” (281), whereas Friedrich Nietzsche considers that parody is nothing but “lack of originality and its laughter the laughter of despair” (281). Foucault mentions, that it is “critical of reality” (281) and Baudrillard criticizes its “lack of power, intentionality, and difference” (282). Beate Müller mentions that nowadays two different “schools” of parody specialists exist. She says that

[...] for once the traditionally negative view of parody had been cast aside, both the apologetic and the accusatory tendencies which can be traced in older criticism gave way to a wider perspective, which in turn resulted in two different “schools”. Thus, scholars whose primary aim is to discover something of the workings of parody are juxtaposed with those who do not focus on parody as such but use the term more or less indiscriminately for their own ends. (6ff)

The first group of parody specialists focuses on the study of texts, which can be described as predominantly parodic. Their main interests of study “are definitions of parody, typologies of the various parodic forms, studies on the history and etymology of parody, analyses of parodic technique, and the attempt to distinguish parody from related forms such as travesty” (7). Intertextuality specialists are mentioned in the second group of parody specialists. Their interest in parody is, according to Müller, that “parodic traits are but one facet of a complex and highly literary tapestry” (7).

The before mentioned differences between parody and related forms is another problem that occurs in many publications. Terms such as burlesque, caricature, pastiche, and travesty can be found in all the major works on parody. It is not the aim of this thesis to define all of these different humorous categories, but it rather sees and unites all of them as synonyms of the term parody.

Despite all those different points of view, it is important to define the term when it comes to a practical analysis of parody. According to Rose (5) a major problem of defining parody “has been the restriction of the description of parody to only one or two aspects of that term or its usage” (5). She (5ff) further mentions six aspects that are important for a proper definition. Those aspects are the parody’s etymology, its comic aspect, the attitude of the parodist to the work parodied, the reader’s reception of it, the text in which the parody is not just a specific technique but the “general” mode of the work itself and its relationship to other comic or literary forms. The etymology of the word parody is a very complex one, as the meaning of the word has changed over the centuries from ancient Greek to its present day use. The comic aspect of the parody always lies in the eye of the beholder. The examples on the following pages of this thesis can only unfold their entire comic and parodic potential if the audience is aware of the source text, Francis Ford Coppola’s *The Godfather*. The attitude of the parodist to the work parodied is not relevant for this thesis, as the presented examples never attempt to be political or socio-critical statements. The experience of the parody text as comic means that the reader can look for structural and other such reasons by which comic effects are achieved in the text in question. Korkut claims, that “it is after all commonly contended that parody is a form that usually includes some kind of humor” (21).

The definition of parody for this thesis therefore is also taken from Korkut, as it serves as the most reasonable one. Korkut defines parody as an “[...] intentional imitation – of a text, style, genre or discourse – which includes an element of humor and which has an aim of interpreting its target in one way or another” (21).

Korkut’s definition is very short and straight to the point. A parody is an intentional imitation of a text, style, genre or discourse. This is true for all the references analyzed in the practical part of this thesis. All of them are intentional created by the directors, screenwriters, and actors of TV-shows. These imitations almost always include an element of humor. This is again true for all the analyzed references. Even if the reference is presented in a serious or even tragic way, it still maintains a humorous notion for those aware of the reference. The intentional imitation aims at interpreting its target in one way or another. It can only be assumed that the main aim of most of the references, if not of all of them, is to pay homage to *The Godfather*, be it to its director Francis Ford Coppola or to its cast. The next chapter deals with the development of parody in movies and TV-shows.

### **2.2.1. Parody in contemporary US-American TV-shows**

The origins and traditions in movie parodies go back to the days of silent movies in the early twentieth century. Actors such as Buster Keaton, Charlie Chaplin, Stan Laurel and Oliver Hardy made use of parodic elements in their movies and thereby established and formed the very successful genre or film parodies. Dan Harries claims that “[a]s cinema quickly developed its own canons and conventions, it also began to parody its own narrative scenarios and devices” (11).

With the invention of animated movies and cartoons another genre rose that constantly used parody as a comical means. Especially the early Warner Bros. Studio cartoons self-reflexively tackled the Hollywood institution and its output (13). They lampooned all kinds of film modes, movie stars and popular genres. Today the audience is able to enjoy the fruit of this pioneer work with all-parody cartoons such as *The Simpsons*, *South Park*, *Family Guy*, and *American Dad*.

The parody in movies, TV shows and cartoons targets literally everything – from other movies and TV shows to family idyll to recent political and social events to catastrophes. The list is endless and as a result of the genre-typical constant desensitization there are almost no taboos left. Matt Stone and Trey Parker, the creators of *South Park*, are not afraid to include even the most controversial topics in their TV show. They made parodies of 9/11, child abuse, the holocaust and the Special Olympics, only to mention a few of the topics. According to the website [guardian.co.uk](http://guardian.co.uk), they even received death threats from Islamic groups for showing Mohammed, the founder of Islam, in a Teddy bear costume.

Especially the animated TV show *The Simpsons* took parody to a whole new level. Jonathan Gray claims that “parody and irreverent humor are certainly no strangers to television, but *The Simpsons* seems to have ushered in a new era of ironically distanced and distancing humor, and of the expectation of such humor” (7). *The Simpsons* were created by the American cartoonist, screenwriter, and producer Matt Groening in the mid-eighties for the TV variety show *The Tracey Ullman Show*. Since *The Simpsons* debuted in December 1989 the show has so far broadcasted almost 500 episodes in twenty-two seasons and is therefore the



longest-running American sitcom and the longest-running American animated program, says their very own *simpsons.wikia.com*.

There is an endless list of references to many movies and TV shows within *The Simpsons*. Even entire episodes are based on movies, such as “22 Short Films About Springfield”, the twenty-first episode of season seven, which is a loose parody of Quentin Tarantino’s 1994 masterpiece *Pulp Fiction*, or the first episode of the eighteenth season “The Mook, the Chef, the Wife and Her Homer”, which features characters as well as scenes from *The Godfather*. The title of this episode is a reference to Peter Greenway’s *The Cook, the Thief, His Wife & Her Lover*, a British/French romantic crime drama from 1989. One of the more recent episodes, the ninth episode of the twenty-second season to be precise, is called “Donnie Fatso”, which is a parody of the 1997 crime drama *Donnie Brasco* starring Johnny Depp and Al Pacino. The parodies concerning *The Godfather* in *The Simpsons* range from the simple mentioning of characters or quotations to entire imitations of scenes from the original movie.

Another very useful source for references and parodies of *The Godfather* is the television drama series *The Sopranos*. As Lewis (27) claims, back in the 1970s, during the pre-production stage of *The Godfather* many famous directors refused the offer to direct the movie. This refusal was based on the fact that *The Godfather* portrays an Italian-American gangster family as protagonists, the so-called “good guys”, for the first time, and none of the directors was willing to bear this morally doubtful burden. *The Sopranos*, created by David Chase, is also centered around a New Jersey-based Italian-American mafia clan and takes an even closer look at the private lives of the main characters than *The Godfather* did. Running for 86

episodes in six seasons between 1999 and 2007, *The Sopranos* became a highly successful TV show in terms of critical as well as financial success. According to *wikipedia.com*, the series became the financially most successful TV show in the history of US-American cable television and is also widely acknowledged as one of the greatest television series of all time. *Imdb.com* says it was awarded with twenty-one Emmys and five Golden Globes. Obviously a series about an Italian-American mafia family features many references to the movie about an Italian-American mafia family, which is considered to be *The Godfather*.

Nowadays it is almost impossible to watch any TV show or movie without encountering instances of parody. Besides the already mentioned pioneers in the days of silent movies comedians such as the British group Monty Python's Flying Circus, the American TV show *Saturday Night Live*, directors such as Mel Brooks, and producers and screenplay writers such as the most famous trio in the parody genre, Zucker, Abrahams and Zucker, who created many genre-defining movies such as *The Naked Gun*, *Airplane!* and *Top Secret!*, are responsible for the high public popularity of parodies in today's movie business.

The next chapter takes a closer look on the book *Film Parody* by Dan Harries who provides six categories on how parody is produced and occurs in movies and TV-shows.

### **2.2.2. Dan Harries' Parodic Methods**

How are parodies in movies and TV-shows constructed and on which levels do they work? Dan Harries categorizes parody into six more or less differential types

in his book *Film Parody*. Those six methods of parody are **reiteration**, **inversion**, **misdirection**, **literalization**, **extraneous inclusion** and **exaggeration**. Harries (39) also distinguishes whether the parody occurs on the level of **lexicon** (sets, characters, costumes, iconography), on the level of **syntax** (narrative development, temporal progression of the plot) and **style** (visual technique, sound, titles). These six parodic methods provide a standard to examine how parody constructs the metatext across different modes and genres.

The first parodic method mentioned is called **reiteration**. It happens through evocation or quotation of particular elements from the targeted text, to “both create an association between the source text and the parody as well as to establish conventional narrative expectations” (43). On the lexical level Francis Ford Coppola’s *The Godfather* offers enough material for reiteration especially through its characters. Many parodies occurring in TV-shows and analyzed for this paper are centered on the character of Don Vito Corleone, played by Marlon Brando, and his significant voice and gestures. Some references and parodies discussed in the practical part also focus on the recreation of sets from the original movie. This is, as the practical part will show, easier to achieve in animated TV shows, such as *The Simpsons*, than in real TV shows. The same is true for the incorporation of scenes based on similarity from the source text, which happens on the level of syntax (47). For the screenwriters of animated TV shows it is apparently far easier to incorporate a scene from *Star Wars* or *The Godfather* in one of their scripts than it is for the screenwriters of other TV shows. The effort of shooting such a scene is too complex and too expensive to achieve for most production companies. On the level of style the evoked elements in the analyzed scenes occur as visual or

audible references. Especially the original score of *The Godfather*, composed by Nino Rota, has doubtlessly a very high recognition value.

The second parodic method is called **inversion**. Harries claims, that “inversion is used as a parodic method to modify the lexicon, syntax, or style by way of creating a signifier, which obtains an opposite meaning from its employment in the target text” (55). This modification can, on the level of lexicon, occur in terms of setting and character.

**Misdirection**, the third parodic method, functions, according to Harries, “by creating ironic incongruity through both the reiteration and the transformation of the target text. This occurs when specific conventional elements are evoked and initially played out in a manner similar to the target text, but are then transformed to deliver an unexpected turn in the eventual parodic presentation” (62). The audience expects the presented scene to end like the original scene in the target text but is then taken by surprise as the before mentioned turn transforms the scene into a parody. A good example for **misdirection** on the level of syntax is the scene in *The Simpsons*’ episode “Lisa’s Pony”. The whole scene pays homage to the horse’s head scene in the original movie. The cutting, the camera angles, and the music are quite similar to the target text. The turn at the end of the scene is that Lisa discovers not only a horse’s head but also a whole living pony lying next to her.

**Literalization** is the next parodic method. Here the targeted text is “transformed through the use of puns (visual, textual, aural) as well as through specific formations of self-reflexivity to “literalize” the film-making process” (71). A very

common practice on the lexical level is the transformation of character names. In a scene from the *My Wife and Kids* episode “Double Date”, Janet calls her husband, who annoys her by impersonating Vito Corleone, “Don Baldione” (03:43). This **literalization** here targets at both, his imitation of Vito Corleone and his bald head.

“Within the syntactic progression of a narrative, actions and objects can often be transformed based on principles of literalization by playing off a word’s double meaning and meaning” (71). In the episode “He’s Slippin’ ‘Em Bread...” of the *Gilmore Girls*, Sookie asks Lorelai to taste her soup. After Lorelai has tasted the soup she suggests to “godfather it up for me” (10:20), actually meaning that it is not spicy enough.

In terms of style, music is often literalized. In *The Simpsons* episode “Lisa’s Pony” the whole horse’s head scene is redone. At the very beginning of this scene *The Simpsons’* score is played (11:48), recognizable as the original score, but in a slower pace and with different instrumentation, so that it also resembles and evokes the memory of the original score of *The Godfather*.

Film parodies often disrupt expected conventional associations through the method of **extraneous inclusion**. According to Harries, this parodic method “operates by inserting “foreign” lexical units into a conventionalized syntax or through the inclusion of narrative scenes that fall outside of the target text’s general convention” (77). The character of Salem Saberhagen, the talking cat in the TV show *Sabrina, the Teenage Witch* is innately already an extraneous inclusion, as a talking cat contradicts the general convention of domestic animals. In the episode “Rumor Mill”, Salem embodies a gangster boss in the fashion of

Vito Corleone. Another example would be the nameless character in the restaurant scene in *The Simpsons* episode “Moe Baby Blues”, who claims to be a member of the Italian-American Anti Defamation League. During the production of *The Godfather* the Italian-American Anti Defamation League, a civil rights organization formed in the early 1970s, was concerned about the movie and its depiction of Italian-American citizens. Lewis (32ff) further claims, that one of their successes was that the word “mafia” does not occur once in the movie.

The last parodic method Harries mentions is called **exaggeration**. It functions by “targeting lexical, syntactic and stylistic elements of the target text and extending them beyond their conventionally expected limits” (83). An example for **exaggeration** concerning *The Godfather* can be found in the above mentioned *The Simpsons*’ episode “Moe Baby Blues”. Towards the end of the episode Maggie follows a couple of gangsters into an Italian restaurant and ends up in a standoff where more than a dozen men are looking down each other’s gun barrels.

In a lot of references analyzed in the practical part the major problem of Harries’ categories gets revealed. The constraints between the different categories are sometimes overlapping and therefore a reference can be labeled more than one of the before mentioned categories.

The following chapters contain the practical part of this thesis. The history and the making of the book and the movie *The Godfather* are briefly summed up and a short summary of the plot are provided. The largest chapter of the practical part discusses all the allusions and references taken from contemporary US-American TV-shows in terms of Genette’s transtextuality and Harries’ parodic methods.

### **3. *The Godfather* and its legacy**

The practical part of this thesis gives a short overview of the history and origins of *The Godfather* and then provides a more detailed examination of selected scenes from the movie and an analysis of the corresponding references taken from contemporary US-American TV-shows.

#### **3.1. The target text *The Godfather***

As already mentioned before, Francis Ford Coppola's movie *The Godfather* is the target text of this diploma thesis. The movie, produced in 1972, is itself an example of intermediality, as its screenplay is based on Mario Puzo's novel of the same name. Mario Puzo, who wrote the book towards the end of the 1960s, was also directly involved in writing the screenplay together with Francis Ford Coppola.

Puzo, who was born in 1920 in New York to Italian immigrants, states (32) that *The Godfather* was the third novel and that he wrote it primarily for financial reasons. Actually, he didn't want to write the novel at all and his intention was to write a completely different story. Finally however, the support of his colleagues and a \$ 5.000 payment in advance from the publishing company (34) were convincing enough. It took him three years to finish *The Godfather*, and he claims (35) that he wrote the whole story merely based on research without any personal experience with organized crime. This claim is the result of accusations, that *The Godfather* serves as public relations for the mafia and that the mobsters paid Puzo an enormous amount of money to write it. Canon writes, that "*The Godfather* shows a profound understanding of Mafia ethics" (65). The book was finally

published in 1969, and its immediate success exceeded far beyond Puzo's imagination. According to him (39) it brought him enough money to never worry about it anymore. The novel remained on the *New York Times* bestseller list for sixty-seven consecutive weeks, and the actual review in the *New York Times* was promising. Dick Schaap compares the book with Philip Roth's "Portnoy's Complaint". He says that "with loving care and detail, what Roth has done for masturbation, Puzo has done for murder" (1969). His final sentence advises the reader to "pick a night with nothing good on television, and you'll come out far ahead."

During the pre-production of Coppola's *The Godfather*, the success of the book was not measurable. The Hollywood-based production company Paramount had bought the rights for the novel for a very low amount of money long before the novel was published. Puzo claims (40) that it was a big mistake to sell the rights so cheap, but back then, before *The Godfather* became a huge success, he needed all the money he could get. Without the success of the novel, Paramount would have never produced *The Godfather*. Phillips (88) writes, that in 1968 the company produced a movie called *The Brotherhood*, starring Kirk Douglas. *The Brotherhood* is a movie about the mafia and shares many similarities with *The Godfather*. However, it turned out to be an artistic and financial flop. This led to the opinion that movies about the mafia will not succeed. Confronted with the novel's worldwide success Paramount nevertheless decided to produce *The Godfather*. Puzo was asked to write the screenplay and he accepted. Together with the young and unknown director Francis Ford Coppola he worked on the screenplay. According to Lewis (27ff), the cast of Coppola as a director was a rather controversial one. He was not the studio's first choice. Paramount offered the job



to prominent directors such as Sergio Leone and Peter Bogdanovic, who declined it. Coppola got the job due to the facts that the screenplay for *Patton*, which he had co-written, won an Academy Award in 1970 and that he is of Italian ancestry. Phillips (88) claims that the Paramount executive Robert Evans blamed the failure of *The Brotherhood* on the fact that almost none of the creative personnel connected with the picture were of Italian descent.

When shooting began Coppola was asked to work with a very low budget, but as the novel became more prominent and successful, Robert Evans and producer Al Ruddy agreed to upgrade the production to an A picture (92). Coppola and the producers still had a few disagreements about the cast of Marlon Brando, Al Pacino, and Talia Shire, Coppola's sister, but all problems were put aside and the movie was shot. It was in March 1972 when the movie finally premiered in theatres. The audience loved it and it became and still is one of the most successful movies in terms of Academy Award nominations. *Imdb.com* further informs, that at the Academy Awards of 1973 *The Godfather* was nominated ten times and won the Awards for best picture, best actor in a leading role, and best adapted screenplay. Marlon Brando caused a huge scandal in Hollywood, when he refused to accept the award for best actor in a leading role protesting against the depiction of Native Americans in Hollywood production. Despite this scandal, the second part of *The Godfather* was produced between 1973 and 1974. It is both, a sequel and a prequel of the original movie. It continues the story of the Corleone family in the late 1950s and also features flashbacks to create a second storyline, which narrates the story of Vito Corleone from his childhood days in Sicily to his first criminal acts in New York. *The Godfather II* became almost as successful as its predecessor and many critics praise it as equal, or even superior, to the original

film. The third part of *The Godfather*-saga was produced in 1990 is generally considered the weakest of the three parts. It was again co-written by Puzo and Coppola and it completes the story of the Corleone family. The movie became again very successful in financial terms and was nominated for seven Academy Awards, winning none.

### **3.1.1. The story of *The Godfather***

*The Godfather* tells the story of an Italian-American family whose patriarch was forced to leave Sicily as a young boy after he witnessed the murder of his parents by local gangsters. The story of how the young boy became the notorious and influential boss of a criminal organization is told at the beginning of *The Godfather II*. The first part of the trilogy, which is the major concern of this paper, opens in the summer of 1945 in Long Island at the wedding of Vito Corleone's daughter Constanzia to Carlo Rizzi. Almost all the major characters of the movie are introduced in the first scenes of the movie. The Godfather, Don Vito Corleone, has four children, Santino, Frederico, Michael and Constanzia. Santino is his eldest son. He is tall, strong, promiscuous and the one who is supposed to take over the family business after the Don will retire. Fredo is the second son and he is rather weak. Michael, the youngest son, is a decorated war hero. He volunteered in the Second World War against the will of his family. He loves his family but he does not want to be involved in any of their business. Tom Hagen is the adopted son of the Corleones. He is of Irish descent and, after his education, is responsible for the legal representation of the family and also serves as the Don's counselor. Vito Corleone runs a company that imports olive oil from Sicily to the United States. This company covers all the illegal activities the family is involved in. Those illegal

activities include racketeering, gambling, and prostitution among many other things. Because of his life-long experience in the world of organized crime, Vito Corleone has established good and close contacts to high-ranking politicians, judges, policemen and journalists. All those contacts enable him to lead his illegal activities without concerns about any legal interference...

On the following pages, the most significant scenes of the movie are described and retold, in order to understand the allusions and references in the examples taken from TV-shows. Those selected scenes also continue to summarize the plot of *The Godfather*.

### **3.2. Selected scenes and the corresponding analyzed references**

The source text for the intertextual and parody analysis of this diploma thesis is Francis Ford Coppola's *The Godfather I*. The preceding chapter already discussed the significant role of *The Godfather* in movie history. This chapter presents selected scenes from the original movie, which are the basis for the following analysis. Those scenes were chosen merely for the fact that they are referred to multiple times, some less often, some more often, in TV shows. These reoccurring references and the common meaning and relation they create while occurring, is what connects them.

#### **3.2.1. The opening scene**

The movie starts with a very significant scene in Vito Corleone's office in his family residence in Long Island. It is his daughter's wedding day, and, according to the

movie, tradition has it that a Sicilian father cannot refuse any request asked on that special day.

The screen is black, in the background the Godfather Waltz is played. Then a male voice with an Italian accent says, "I believe in America" (01:14). The face of Bonasera, illuminated only with a spotlight and presented in a straight angle, appears out of dark. It is captured in close-up. As he continues to speak, the camera zooms out at a very slow pace. It takes more than a minute for the camera to reach an angle where the audience are able to see where Bonasera actually is and to whom he is talking to. The first visible part of his respondent is a gesturing hand, while the camera is still zooming out. During the slow camera movement, the wooden walls of an office and a wooden desk appear on screen. The zooming of the camera stops at an over-the-shoulder shot of Don Vito Corleone also showing Bonasera in medium close up sitting in front of the Don's desk (see fig. 4). Bonasera is a mortician, whose daughter got molested by two young men. He trusted in the American legal system but this trust was betrayed. The two abusers did not receive just punishment so he turns to Don Corleone in despair. Vito Corleone promises to take care of the two young men. It is the core of his business philosophy to do someone a favor, any favor, only for the promise to return the favor some day. In a reverse shot the audience then sees Don Vito Corleone sitting at his desk while petting a cat on his lap (see fig. 5).

Vito Corleone: "Some day and that day may never come, I'll call upon you to do a service for me. But until that day accept this justice as a gift on my daughter's wedding day." (06:36)



figure 4



figure 5

The first reference to the opening scene of *The Godfather* presented in this thesis is taken from the *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* episode “The Nagus”. In this episode, Quark, the Ferengi owner of the bar on the space station Deep Space 9, becomes the Grand Nagus, which is the leader of the Ferengi Alliance, by lucky incident. The Ferengi society is based on capitalism and all of its members are always craving for profit. Many Ferengi now turn to Quark to ask him for various favors. One of these scenes is presented as homage to the opening scene in *The Godfather*. A Ferengi visits Quark in his office. The scene starts with a frontal close up on the Ferengi while the camera is slowly zooming out. At first, only the head of the Ferengi is visible. As the camera zooms out, the shoulder of another person gets in the picture (see fig. 6). Behind the seated Ferengi two other Ferengi appear on the screen while he keeps talking. A cut shows Quark in medium close up sitting on his desk and petting an unidentifiable animal on his lap (see fig. 7). The scene continues with business negotiations between Quark and his visitor. Comparing the two screenshots from *The Godfather* with the two screenshots from the *Star Trek* episode it is obvious that the director’s aim was to refer to the target text in the forms of shot types, camera angles, and camera movement and setting. In terms of Genette’s theory of transtextuality, this scene can be labeled as hypertextuality as it copies the original scene and modifies it: the conversation no

longer takes place between two humans in a house on Long Island but on a futuristic space station between two alien life forms. In terms of Dan Harries' parodic methods, the scene can be seen as reiteration since it evokes references to the target text through the use of similar camera and lightening techniques as well as a similar setting. At the same, time it can also be seen as extraneous inclusion, based on the use of foreign lexical items, the aliens.



figure 6



figure 7

Another reference to the opening scene can be found in the *Freakazoid* episode “The Freakazoid”. Here (see fig. 8) the same means as in *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* are used to evoke a reference to the original scene. Don Corleone is replaced by the fictional character of Freakazoid, a blue-skinned comic superhero. This replacement provides another example of extraneous inclusion.



figure 8

### 3.2.2. I'm gonna make him an offer he cannot refuse.

The phrase “I’m gonna make him an offer he cannot refuse” appears three times in *The Godfather*, although slightly modified the first time. In a scene at the wedding (19:50) Michael Corleone tells his wife Kay about his family and how his father handles his business. They are sitting in the garden surrounded by other wedding guests. Among those guests is the famous singer and actor Johnny Fontane. Kay wants to know why he came to the wedding, and Michael tells her, that his father helped him with his career.

Michael: “When Johnny was first starting out he was signed to this personal service contract with a big band leader, and as his career got better and better he wanted to get out of it now. Johnny is my father’s godson and my father went to see this bandleader and he offered him ten thousand dollars to let Johnny go but the bandleader said no. So the next day my father went to see him only this time with Luca Brasi and within an hour he signed a release for a certified check of one thousand dollars.”

Kay: “How’d he do that?”

Michael: “My father made him an offer he couldn’t refuse.”

Kay: “What was that?”

Michael: “Luca Brasi held a gun to his head and my father assured him that either his brains or his signature would be on the contract. That’s a true story. That’s my family, Kay, not me” (19:50)

The second time the phrase is spoken by Vito Corleone himself. Johnny Fontane, who is also present at the wedding, is once again in need for help concerning his

career, so he turns to his godfather. Jack Woltz, a big studio boss in Hollywood refuses to cast him for the leading role in a movie. The character would fit Johnny well and the movie could definitely make him a star. Corleone promises Johnny to solve this problem. Johnny, not aware of his godfather's influence and power, wants to know how he will do it. Vito Corleone answers him in one simple sentence: "I'm gonna make him an offer he cannot refuse" (23:50).

The third time it is again said by Michael. When he is asked by his brother Fredo, how he wants to buy the Las Vegas Casino from Moe Greene, Michael answers: "I'm gonna make him an offer he cannot refuse" (2:16:40).

The line "I'm gonna make him an offer he cannot refuse" is probably the most prominent one in the whole movie and together with the famous horse's head scene, described below, it is also among the most frequently quoted *Godfather* scenes in TV shows. As the examples later will show, in most of the scenes where the line is quoted, the actors in TV-shows attempt to imitate both, Marlon Brando's significant voice and gestures. Brando is the star of the movie and Reader mentions, that "the very concept of a film star is an intertextual one, relying as it does on correspondences of similarity and differences from one film to the next, and sometimes too on supposed resemblances between on- and off-screen personae" (176). The most significant of Brando's acted gestures is the scratching of his prominent chin while talking. The gesture can be seen in figure 9 below. According to Phillips (95) Brando had a very clear notion on how to bring the character of Vito Corleone to life. In Phillips book Coppola described the first screen test with Brando as the Don.



He [Brando] put on a rumpled shirt and a jacket, then he took some shoe polish and and dabbed on a moustache. Next he stuffed Kleenex in his jaws, saying “The godfather should have the face of a bulldog. (95)



figure 9

In the *Grey's Anatomy* episode “Physical Attraction...Chemical Reaction” two of the main characters, Doctor Sheppard and Chief Webber, are talking about their evening plans. Chief Webber suggests that they are watching *The Godfather* together. To emphasis his wish to watch the movie Chief Webber looks deep into Doctor Sheppard’s eyes and says: “Im gonna make them an offer they can’t refuse” (02:15). He does so without any attempt to imitate Brando’s voice or gestures. Therefore, this scene is intertextual and can be labeled reiteration.

In the *Full House* episode “Another Opening – Another No-Show” the coffee machine, called Mr. Cappuccino, in Jesse’s new club does not work properly. After a couple of tries it finally worked. DJ, Dan’s daughter, asks her Dad how he managed to get the coffee machine to work. Another character, Joey, who plays a radio host and comedian in the show, answers her. He says: “Maybe he made it an offer that it couldn’t refuse” (15:55). Joey says the sentence imitating both Brando’s voice and gesture.

A quite similar scene occurs in *The Simpsons* episode “Hom’r”. Homer Simpson volunteers to take part in a presentation of digital motion capture at the mall. He wears a special suit, which transfers all his motion onto a digital cartoon dog on a big screen behind him. Homer goofs around a little bit, scratches his ear with one of his legs, like dogs use to do, and then (see fig. 10) he relates the famous line from *The Godfather*, “Let me see. I make him an offer he can’t refuse” (04:00), imitating the voice the gestures, but not the voice.



figure 10

In the *Gilmore Girls* episode “Always a Godmother...” Rory is going to be the godmother of Sooki’s baby. She visits her friend Lane before the baptism to tell her the exciting news. Lane and her band mates are busy with their new recording equipment. The characters are discussing the meaning of being a godmother and one of Lane’s band mates says the famous line imitating the voice of Brando’s Corleone.

S1: “Hey, is it true you keep the baby if the parents die?”

Rory: “I’m just doing it as a favor for Sooki.”

S2: “Godmother. D’you make her an offer she couldn’t refuse? “

S1: “Dude, you totally nailed that.” (30:30)

In the episode “All Guts, No Glory” from *The Fresh Prince of Bel Air*, the character of Will drops out of a class because he doesn’t get along with a new teacher and the required work. Soon he regrets his decision and wants to get back into the class. He asks the teacher for this favor. The teacher answers him in the following dialogue, imitating the voice and the gestures of Brando (see fig. 11).

Teacher: “You come to me my son, asking for a favor. I’m gonna make you an offer you can’t refuse. I let you back in this class.”

Will: “Thanks a lot godfather.” (20:48)



figure 11

The four scenes mentioned above are hypertextualities in terms of Genette’s theory of transtextuality. Regarding Harries’ parodic methods they are all reiterations because they feature quotations of particular elements of *The Godfather*, in their cases quotations of a sentence spoken in the original. Furthermore, they all occur on a lexical level as they refer to the character of Don Corleone and his most significant features, which are the sound of his voice and his gestures.

The following reference is different from the other ones and taken from *The Sopranos* episode “Meadowlands”. Junior and a few other mobsters sit in Junior’s restaurant at the table and have dinner. They seem to be in a good mood and as Anthony Soprano enters the place Junior tells the people he is sitting with the following racist joke.

Junior: “Did you hear about the Chinese godfather? He made them an offer they couldn’t understand.” (19:35)

The joke presented here works as a modified version of Vito Corleone’s famous sentence “I’m gonna make him an offer he cannot refuse”. In terms of Genette’s theory this is a typical example for hypertextuality. The original quote from *The Godfather* is the hypotext, which is transformed into the hypertext by replacing the word “refuse” with the word “understand”. On the parodic level this reference is a literalization, as the targeted text gets transformed through the use of a textual pun.

Many other scenes in TV-shows present impersonations of Don Vito Corleone without quoting the sentence “I’m gonna make him an offer he cannot refuse”, as the following scenes will show. All those examples can be categorized as intertextual and as a reiteration.

The episode “The Godfather” from the TV-show *Married...With Children* features a couple of scenes where Al Bundy, head of the family and main character, appears as an impersonator of Don Vito Corleone. Kelly, Al’s daughter, has a new boyfriend who is running for major. Al takes advantage of that situation and is now

able to ask for small favors from the city council. The favors include the fixing of broken streetlights and holes in the street. The neighbors, who also need favors from the city council, have to ask for appointments and bring gifts to Al.

Marcy and Jefferson, the Bundys' neighbors, have an appointment to ask for a favor. They bring chicken wings as a gift and wait in the living room. In the background, *The Godfather Waltz* is playing. Al appears on the head of the stairs, wearing a black suit with a white silk-scarf (see fig. 12). He welcomes Marcy and Jefferson with a voice reminiscent of Marlon Brando's. When asked about the favor, Al responds: "Remember, some day I may ask you for a favor, this day may never come, but, we both know it probably will, when this day does come you respond in true friendship" (15:45). This sentence is very close to the original sentence that Don Corleone says to Bonasera at the beginning of the original movie.



figure 12

The sentence "Last night, I tried to welcome you into my family. Instead you disrespect me. I cannot allow this" (16:48), spoken by Joey in the *Friends* episode "The One with Phoebe's Wedding", and the sentence "Welcome to the family my son. Some day, we may call on you for a favor, and when I do..." (09:13), spoken

by another character called Joey in the *Full House* episode “Come Fly With Me” (see fig. 13) are both presented by the actors imitating the voice and the gestures of Vito Corleone.



figure 13

Figures 14, taken from *The Nanny* episode “An Offer She Couldn’t Refuse” and figure 15, taken from *The A-Team* episode “Trouble On Wheels” both show characters of the respective TV-shows dressed up and acting in a way obviously intended to refer to Don Vito Corleone. On both pictures the prominent chin, the bloated cheeks and the scratching hand are visible.



figure 14



figure 15

Other impersonations of Don Corleone in TV-shows can be found in Chapter 3.2.10. which revolves around the Don’s death.

### 3.2.3. The horse's head (31:18)

During the research for this thesis, references to the horse's head scene occurred more than a dozen times, ranging from a simple mentioning to re-enactments of the whole scene. Francis Ford Coppola mentions in the audio commentary on *The Godfather* DVD (0:32:40), that even though multiple people get murdered in various brutal ways during the movie, the horse's head scene is probably the most controversial one. The studio, the producers and Coppola himself received many letters from viewers concerning the scene. What Coppola and his team actually did was to cast a horse at a dog food company that was about to get slaughtered. The art director picked one and asked the company to send him the head after the horse is slaughtered. A combination of the camera movement, the used music, a real severed horse's head, and John Marley's acting created one of the most recognizable moments in movie history.

Tom Hagen, Corleone's lawyer and right hand, is sent to Los Angeles to convince Jack Woltz to offer Johnny Fontane the leading role in his new movie. After turning Hagen's request down at the studio he invites him to his mansion. He knows that Hagen works for Corleone. Woltz shows him around on his property and brags about his very expensive racehorse Khartoum. At the dining table he tells Tom Hagen again that he will never cast Johnny Fontane for his new movie. He also knows how Don Corleone bought out Johnny from the contract with the bandleader, but he feels out of reach of Corleone's power on the other side of the continent. Hagen thanks him for the dinner and leaves for the airport.

The next scene shows a long shot of Woltz's mansion on the following morning (see fig. 17). The camera zooms in while panning across the building. A slightly different version of the *Godfather* Waltz and the noise of crickets can be heard. Then a cut shows Woltz covered with a blanket on his bed and the camera zooms in slowly. The music grows louder and more intense. Woltz wakes up and lifts his hand out from under the blanket (see fig. 18). Everything underneath the blanket seems to be soaked in blood. The camera pans slowly towards the lower end of the bed while he pulls away the blanket only to discover the severed head of his beloved stallion Khartoum. Woltz sits on his bed and cries out loud (see fig. 19). While doing he is shown in close up. A cut then presents the house again in a straight angle long shot, and Woltz's screams can still be heard.



figure 17



figure 18



figure 19



There is neither a scene that shows who put the head into Woltz's bed nor how the whole operation did happen. Jack Woltz did however understand the threatening message as Johnny Fontane is offered the role in the movie the following day.

The severed horse's head became a commonly used metaphor in every day language, used as a threat to constrain someone doing something against his will. The following examples show the variety of references towards the horse's head scene in TV-shows. Those references vary from a simple mentioning to whole recreations of the entire scene.

A very unique reference to the scene can be found in the *Futurama* movie "Bender's Big Score". The setting of the TV-show is the 31<sup>st</sup> century. At the very beginning of the movie, there is a banner hanging outside the Head Museum (see fig. 20) in New New York saying: "A Life in Film: That Horse's Head from *The Godfather*" (04:49). It is important to know that in order to be able to let politicians, sports stars, and celebrities from the 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century appear in the show, the creators of *Futurama* came up with the unconventional idea of presenting these characters as their heads only, preserved in small water tanks. This idea makes the appearance of characters such as all US presidents, Pamela Anderson, Leonard Nimoy, and George Foreman possible. In terms of categorization this scene can be labeled as hypertextuality and exaggeration, as the parody targets at the horse's head from *The Godfather* but extends it beyond the conventionally expected limit.



figure 20

The next reference is a rather short and simple one. In terms of Dan Harries' parodic methods it can be seen as literalization, as it presents the target text and then transforms it by using a pun. In *The Simpsons* episode "Guess Who's Coming To Dinner" Homer Simpson works as a restaurant critic for a newspaper. At first he only publishes very good critiques. His boss at the newspaper tells him to write some bad review. Homer does so and that makes the restaurant owners in Springfield angry with him. They meet to discuss their further actions. The chef of the Italian restaurant in Springfield says in a very desperate manner: "Homer is out of control. He gave me a bad review. So my friend put a horse's head on his bed. He ate the head and gave it a bad review. True story" (16:18). Instead of seeing the horse's head as the intended warning or threat, Homer uses the opportunity to write another critique.

All of the following scenes are categorized as literalization. In all of them, the horse's head scene is mentioned but transformed with the use of a pun. The first example is taken from the *Sabrina The Teenage Witch* episode "Rumor Mill". Salem, Sabrina's bewitched talking cat turns into a mob boss as a result of a wrong spell Sabrina used. The tomcat sits together with other Dons around a table at Sabrina's place, and they are talking about business. The pun here is that the

horse's head becomes a mouse head, which seems to be logical when the mob boss is a cat. This example also points out the problem that Harries' categories offer a lot of clearance for different interpretations. On the one hand this reference can be interpreted as literalization due to the transformation by the use of a pun. On the other hand it can be interpreted as exaggeration since a talking cat is presented as a mafia don and the horse's head becomes a mouse head.

Salem: "No wait. I want that cat to wake up with a mouse head in his bed."

Don Calamari: "Of course, godfather."

Salem: "On a second thought, bring me the mouse head." (13:42)

In *The Sopranos* episode "Everybody Hurts", Anthony Jr., the son of the head of the Soprano family, and a couple of his friends sit together and discuss an army draft. One of the speakers assumes that Anthony Jr.'s father put a horse's head into a senator's bed to prevent him from getting drafted into the US army.

S1: "It's true dude. They gonna start a draft."

S2: "There's no fucking way I'm going in the army."

S3: "Yeah, cause his old man put a horse's head in some senator's bed."

S1: "<laughs>"

S4: "Cut it, Jason."

S2: "No big."

S5: "Ever get paranoid they like shoot up your house like in Godfather II?"

S1: "They probably got armed guards at night."

S2: "That shit doesn't happen anymore."

S1: "You got dogs on the property?"

S2: "No, I mean, we did, but she got hit by a car."

S5: "Jason said, your old man is mostly legitimate anyway."

S1: "He is like what?"

S2: "He is in waste management."

S6: "Garbage?"

S1: "Garbage?"

S2: "Recycling."

S1: "What about drugs and prostitution and shit?"

S2: "No!"

S3: "His dad runs a strip club though."

S1: "Let's go."

S6: "We get carded."

S1: "We can just stop by and then watch the strippers coming in and out right?" (02:45)

In the *House MD* episode "Moving The Chains" another reference to the horse's head scene in a dialogue can be found. Somebody is playing practical pranks on House and Wilson in their new apartment, so the both decide to stay up all night and catch the prankster in action. While they are hiding behind the kitchen counter they start to argue about the pranks and at the end of their conversation House threatens Wilson that he might wake up next to a horse's head. He transforms the original scene by mentioning that it would be even worse to wake up next to the rest of the horse.

Wilson: "I am so tired. It was exiting until about two a.m. Now it's just torture."

House: "Didn't you go to college?"

Wilson: "This is the escalation, isn't it? Keeping me up all night. Nothing happens, and then you keep me up all night again tomorrow. This is your retaliation."

House: "You see that's just illogical, cause I'm staying up, too."

Wilson: "Maybe you napped all day."

House: "I gave you empirical proof that I did not prank you."

Wilson: "No. No, you did not. You created empirical proof that I did not prank you. Selling me on the notion that you didn't prank me. Maybe you self-pranked."

House: "I don't mastur-prank."

Wilson: "Is that cut on your cheek even real?"

House: "See? This is exactly what our nemesis wants - divide and conquer."

Wilson: "Can't you see that? {Wilson gets up and leaves the kitchen} Well, ok. I'm gonna go to bed."

House: "I'm telling you. If you sleep now you gonna wake up next to a severed horse head, or worse - the rest of it." (28:05)

In the *Two and a Half Men* episode "I called him Magoo" Alan Harper is about to spend a romantic weekend with his new girlfriend, who is the single mother of one of Alan's son Jake's friends, in a hotel. Unfortunately, the woman gets her menstrual period as they check into their hotel room. She is in the bathroom and mentions the horse's head scene to illustrate and exaggerate her condition (11:38). Alan then aggravates her exaggeration by referring to the prom scene in the movie *Carrie*. *Carrie* is a movie based on a Stephen King novel, directed in 1976 by Brian de Palma. Carrie, the main character of the movie, is a young, shy

girl who gets bullied in High School and develops telekinetic powers. The prom scene mentioned by Alan shows Carrie on stage at the prom of Bates High School as voted Prom Queen. A girl who wants to take revenge on Carrie manipulates the vote and she and her friends place a bucket full of pig blood above the stage and pour it down on Carrie right after the coronation. Therefore the prom scene in *Carrie* tops *The Godfather's* horse's head scene in terms of bloodshed.

Woman (in the bathroom): <groans>

Alan: "Cramps, huh?"

Woman: "No, I'm having another child!"

Alan: <laughs> "You know, not that I am complaining but don't you girls usually circle this time of the month on the old calendar?"

Woman: "It's not an exact science, Alan. For god's sake, it's like the horse head scene in *The Godfather*."

Alan: "Could be worse. Could be the prom scene from *Carrie*." (11:38)

In the *CSI: Las Vegas* episode "Fracked" a murder victim, an investigative journalist, who was about to uncover an environmental scandal tied to a big industrial company, received several threats before he finally gets killed. Among those threats is a severed head of a goat delivered in a parcel. After the man was found dead, the widow tells the CSI officers about the goat's head and several other threats. The head is then taken to pathology for closer examination. Asked by Doctor Langston what purpose this goat's head might serve in his opinion, the Chief Medical Examiner Robbins responds: "I've seen *The Godfather* eleven times. This was a message. It's not a horse head, but, hey, times are tough" (18:20).

The horse's head scene is only mentioned in all the previous scenes whereas the following seven examples present scenes from various TV-shows where the original horse's head scene is copied in terms of style, setting, camera movement and angles, and acting.

In the *Malcolm in the Middle* episode "Goodbye Kitty", Reese finds an old diary in the garage. While reading it, he falls in love with the girl who wrote it. At the end (21:05) he finds out that his mother is the author of the diary. He screams in his bed. A cut then shows a long shot of the house during the scream reminiscent the original scene. Neither *The Godfather* nor the horse's head are mentioned but particular elements of the shooting style of the scene are a direct reference to the shooting style of the original scene, which marks it as hypertextuality and as reiteration.

The following scenes all feature recreations of the horse's head scene with different characters from TV-shows waking up in bed next to severed heads or other things. All those references occur on the level of lexicon, as they refer to sets and characters of *The Godfather*, and on the level of style as they copy visual techniques and the sound. The problem with Harries' categories becomes distinct in almost all the following examples. They all feature elements that can be labeled reiteration, inversion, misdirection, extraneous inclusion, exaggeration and literalization.

The first scene is taken from *The Simpsons'* episode "The Tell-Tale Head". Bart wants to impress a couple of elder kids in school. One of them mentions how cool it would be to saw off the head of the statue of Jebediah Springfield, the founder of

the city of Springfield. For Bart, this seems to be the right test of courage and he actually saws off the head and hides it at the Simpsons' house.

The scene where Bart wakes up next to the severed head of Jebediah Springfield starts the same way as the original scene from *The Godfather*. A long shot presents the house of the Simpsons (see fig.21), the camera slowly gets closer and a slightly changed version of *The Simpsons'* title melody can be heard. After a cut a close-up shows Bart asleep, who, after moving his head, discovers the severed head. (see fig. 22)



figure 21



figure 22

The title of this episode and several scenes are allusions to Edgar Allan Poe's famous short story *The Telltale Heart*. The slightly modified version of *The Simpsons'* title melody is a literalization on the level of style. It is changed in terms of pace and instrumentation to resemble the music used in the original scene. The use of similar camera angles and shot types is a reiteration on the level of style. The Simpsons' house and Bart waking up next to the severed head are reiterations on the lexical level, as they represent particular elements from the target text, to both create an association between the source text and the parody as well as to establish conventional narrative expectations. The use of the severed head of Jebediah Springfield instead of the horse's head categorized as



extraneous inclusion, because it inserts a foreign lexical unit into the conventionalized syntax.

The next reference is again taken from a *The Simpsons*' episode. In "Lisa's Pony", Homer wants to be loved by his daughter Lisa so he decides to buy her a pony. As a surprise, he hides the pony in her bed while she is asleep. The scene starts with a long shot of the Simpsons' house (see fig. 23) and the tune used is the same as in the original scene, when Jack Woltz wakes up in his bed. A cut shows a closer shot of the house from a different angle. The next cut takes the audience into Lisa's bedroom where a long shot shows her asleep in her bed. Then a close up with a slight fading captures the moment of Lisa waking up and discovering the pony lying next to her (see fig. 24). When she starts screaming, there is a cut back to the long shot of the house at the beginning of the scene, exactly as in the original scene.



figure 23



figure 24

Here, similar to the scene in "The Tell-Tale Head" mentioned above, the original score of *The Simpsons* is modified in terms of pace and instrumentation to resemble the music used in the original scene, which makes it a literalization on the level of style. The fact that Lisa wakes up next to a whole horse and not just its

severed head qualifies this scene as misdirection. Here, specific conventional elements from the original scene are evoked and initially played out in a manner similar to the target text, but are then transformed to deliver an unexpected turn in the parodic presentation. It is also categorized as extraneous inclusion.

In the *Arrested Development* episode “Notapusy”, Michael and his son have an argument about a father-son sportsmen day. The father signs up for it with another kid, which makes the son angry and disappointed. In the scene where Michael wakes up (13:03) he takes his hand out from under the sheets to find some dark liquid covering the hand (see fig. 25). Then he lifts the sheet and sees the severed handlebar of his bike lying on his bed (see fig. 26). Cut to a long shot of the house of the family, but instead of a scream, Michael says: “Hey, does anyone know why my handlebars are in my bed?” The replacement of the horse’s head with the handlebar and the blood with oil is again an example of misdirection on the level of syntax and also for extraneous inclusion.



figure 25



figure 26

The *King Of Queens* episode “No Retreat” features a scene similar to the original one from *The Godfather* where the horse’s head is replaced by a cup of Chinese soup. Dough and Carrie leave Arthur alone at home for the weekend, and he

enjoys his new freedom. Wearing Dough's UPS-uniform he falls asleep in the master bed while eating Chinese food (11:38). A long shot shows the house from outside. The camera pans through the bedroom to show Arthur lying in bed. He slowly wakes up. A close up captures the moment when he realizes that something is wrong. He pulls his hand out from under the sheets to find it covered with Chinese soup. He then lifts the sheets and sees the empty soup cup and the stained sheet. He screams (see fig. 27). A cut to a long shot of the house while Arthur still screams. As in the examples mentioned above, the replacement of the horse's head with Chinese soup is categorized as misdirection and extraneous inclusion.



figure 27

The next two examples feature references where the horse's head is replaced with a hobbyhorse and the severed head of a hobbyhorse. In both scenes this replacement again constitutes misdirection on the level of syntax and an extraneous inclusion. In *The Nanny* episode "An Offer She Can't Refuse", which is a paratextual reference to the famous sentence mentioned previously, Fran dates the father of one of the friends of Mr. Shepard's children, who turns out to be a mob boss. The way he acts and talks is a parody of Marlon Brando in *The*

*Godfather*. After a dinner with the gangster, where shots were fired, Fran wakes up next to a hobbyhorse in her bed and screams (11:45).



figure 28

The *How I Met Your Mother* episode “Canning Randy” features the severed head of a hobbyhorse. In the previous episode “Baby Talk”, Lilly and Marshall are discussing how they are going to name their unborn child. Each name they come up with gets dismissed due to some bad experiences or memories tied to the names. The name Johnny gets dismissed since Lilly has an annoying student with the same name in her kindergarten class, who is shown in a flashback riding a stick horse in class. In this episode Ted asks Lilly how she handled Johnny. So she tells him. The following flashback starts with a panning camera from left to right (18:00). The camera pans over a couple of sleeping children in Lilly’s classroom in medium close up. The camera stops at Johnny Marley. He is covered with a sleeping bag from the neck downward. The music in the background is the same as in the horse’s head scene from *The Godfather*, which is again a literalization on the level of style. Johnny wakes up and lifts the sleeping bag, thus revealing the reveals the severed head of the stick horse. A cut shows Johnny and the severed head again in medium close-up from a side angle. Johnny starts to scream. A cut then shows Lilly with a satisfied smile sitting on her desk in medium

close-up. Johnny's scream can still be heard. The next two cuts, done very quickly, show a long shot of the school building and then a high-angle long shot of the New York skyline while the screaming of the young boy still continues.



figure 29



figure 30

#### **3.2.4. Luca Brasi sleeps with the fishes...(53:20)**

Luca Brasi is the most gruesome and most feared one of Vito Corleone's employees. Even the Don himself is slightly afraid of him, as is pointed out in the book and in the movie. Interestingly enough the Don is also the only person who Luca Brasi respects and fears. As Corleone rejects the drug deal with Virgil Sollozzo, Luca Brasi is sent out to "take care" of Sollozzo, which means to kill him. Sollozzo, aware of Luca Brasi's assignment, kills him first. Figure 31 shows a close up of Luca Brasi's face while he gets strangled with a piano wire, a commonly used murder weapon among mafia hitmen. The killing of Luca Brasi is just the starting point of the events that followed. Sollozzo also takes Tom Hagen as a hostage to convince him about the drug deal and has some of his men assassinate Vito Corleone at the same time. The terrible news about the failed assassination make it to Corleone's family in no time. They immediately try to reach Tom Hagen, at that time held hostage by Sollozzo, and Luca Brasi, who is

already dead. Hours after the attempt at Vito Corleone's life, someone delivers a parcel to the Corleone residence. Sal Tessio opens the parcel, and in it he finds Luca Brasi's bulletproof vest wrapped around two fish. Sonny does not understand the message, so Tessio explains to him that this means that Luca Brasi "sleeps with the fishes", which is a very graphical representation of the fact that Luca Brasi is dead.



figure 31

As much as the severed horse's head became a metaphor for a non-verbal threat, the phrase "to sleep with the fishes" found its way to every day language as a figurative expression for someone who got murdered. Especially in mob circles, it was a known practice to drown victims with the help of so-called cement shoes. *Urbandictionary.com* explains, that the victim's feet were placed in a bucket or a box, which then got filled with wet cement. After the cement dried the victim was thrown into a river, a lake or the ocean to drown. The main advantage of this cruel way to kill is that the bodies are hard to be found since the cement shoes prevent them from floating back to the surface, once the body fills with gas during the process of decomposition.

In *The Simpsons*' episode "The Mook, the Chef, the Wife and her Homer" Fat Tony, Springfield's mob boss, picks up some children to bring them to school. The kids are aware of his "profession". He opens the car and asks them the following question:

Fat Tony: "Who wants to sleep with the fishes? ...because I brought this *Finding Nemo* bedspread." (08:45)

The first part of his speech is said in a very dark, threatening manner whereas the second part is spoken really nice and with a light voice. In this misdirection specific conventional elements are evoked and initially played out in a manner similar to the target text, but are then transformed to deliver an unexpected turn in the eventual parodic presentation.

The next reference is taken from the pilot episode of *The Sopranos*. The two gangsters Christopher and Pussy have to dispose a dead body. While they are trying to get rid of the corps, they argue a lot.

Christopher: "Louise Brasi sleeps with the fishes."

Pussy: "Luca Brasi! Luca!"

Christopher: "Whatever."

Pussy: "There's differences, Christopher. Ok? From the Luca Brasi-situation and this." (27:40)

Here, the young gangster Christopher misquotes the famous line from *The Godfather* by using a wrong first name. This is a hypertextuality and can be categorized literalization because it transforms a character's name.

In the *How I Met Your Mother* episode "The Goat" Lily rescues a goat named Missy brought to her kindergarten class by a farmer who horrifies her students by going into great detail about what will happen to Missy when she visits the butcher. Lily lets the goat stay in her apartment despite all the trouble it causes. Although it does not become a regular cast, the goat reappears and is mentioned in several other episodes. In the episode "The Leap", Ted is fighting with the goat (14:20). While the goat is strangling Ted, his face resembles that of Luca Brasi (see fig. 32) during his strangulation in *The Godfather*. In terms of Harries' parodic methods, this is categorized as reiteration on the lexical level. A particular element of the target text, here the facial expression of Luca Brasi while getting strangled, is imitated and turns into a parody. The comic fact that a goat strangles a man labels this scene as an extraneous inclusion.



figure 32



### 3.2.5. Leave the gun, take the cannoli...(55:38)

This scene shows the assumed indifference of gangsters when killing someone, even a person they know or they have worked with. Peter Clemenza has orders to kill one of Don Corleone's personal bodyguards who called in sick the day the Don almost got killed. This makes him suspicious and he supposedly was paid by Sollozzo to leave the Don unprotected. On his way out of the house, Clemenza's wife asked him to bring some cannoli, a Sicilian pastry. After the bodyguard has been shot in a car near a reed field on the Long Island shore, Clemenza and his associate leave the crime scene. Figure 33 shows Clemenza on the right, and another one of Corleone's employees standing next to the car, and the murder victim lying dead on the steering wheel. Right after the traitor is shot, Clemenza says to the other men: "Leave the gun. Take the cannoli" (0:55:40). He then reaches into the car to drop the gun on the passenger seat and take the box of cannoli to hand it to Clemenza. Both men leave the scene and get into a waiting car.



figure 33

The following example is taken from the *Everybody Hates Chris* episode "Everybody Hates Springbreak". Here the entire original scene is restaged. Chris

visits his friend Greg in hospital, who, after Chris hit him with a car, has a broken leg. They discuss how to get out of the tight spot they are in since Chris was driving the car without owning a driving license. This is of course not the first time something rather terrible happened as a result of their careless behavior and they recall some events where they could manage to escape dangerous situations. Those situations are presented as flashbacks. The first situation parodies the bathroom scene of the movie *Scarface* where a gangster with a chainsaw threatens them. The second situation is taken out of the movie *Deer Hunter* and parodies the Russian roulette scene. Then Chris says: "Remember the time we took out that mobster?" (8:45). The transition from present to past is in this case distinguished by the use of a so-called Dissolve, in which the screen goes wavy. This camera technique is used very commonly to distinguish a flashback. The following scene is presented in a single shot. A medium shot shows a field of reed in the background. The music used is the same as in the original scene from *The Godfather*. Chris, dressed in a suit and wearing a hat, enters from right and the camera pans to the left to follow him. The hood and the windshield of a car and Greg, also dressed in a suit and wearing a hat, get visible. Through the windshield of the car, a dead man behind the steering wheel can be seen (see fig. 34). Chris says to Greg: "Leave the gun, take the pop-tarts" (08:49). Greg puts the gun, which he is holding in his hands, into the car and takes out a box of pop-tarts, a well-known brand of toaster pastries in the United States. The pop-tarts here replace the cannoli, famous Sicilian pastry desserts, from the original scene. He then hands the box to Chris. The two boys walk to the right and the camera zooms in on the dead guy behind the steering wheel before the screen goes wavy again to mark the end of the flashback. In terms of style, the whole scene is a reiteration. The replacement of the cannoli with pop-tarts is an extraneous inclusion.



figure 34

In the *Gilmore Girls* episode “Haunted Leg”, Lorelai does not want to go to lunch with her mother so she complains about it to Sookie. She is about to cancel it. In the dialogue with her friend she compares a visit at her mother’s to a ride with Pete Clemenza. The comic aspect is created through exaggeration, because even though the relation between Lorelai and her mother is not the best one it is highly unlikely that she might end up dead at a visit.

Lorelai: “I know, but that goes against every rule I have in the Gilmore survival guide. Number one, no running with scissors, number two, no pageboy haircuts, number three, never ever have lunch alone with your mother.”

Zuki: “It might not be so bad.”

Lorelai. “Saying yes to this lunch with my mother is like saying “Sounds fun” to a ride with Clemenza.” (19:35)

In the following scene, taken from the *Gilmore Girls* episode “It Should’ve Been Lorelai”, Lorelai and Rory are going to have breakfast at Luke’s diner just like every other day. As nobody is there except Luke himself, they can choose where to sit. During the conversation Lorelai refers to a table in the corner of the diner as

“mafia table” and mentions that no one could attack them with cannoli. Her daughter understands the intended pun and says a slightly different version of the famous sentence. The reference to the scene is categorized as reiteration.

Lorelai: “Such luxury. I never dreamed of.”

Rory: “Where are we gonna sit?”

Lorelai: “I don’t know, how about this table with it’s unobstructed westward view of the wide cosmopolitan expensive Clump street.”

Rory: “Tempting. Do you know that on a clear day you can see all the way to the garbage cans behind Earl’s pancake world.”

Lorelai: “Or we could sit in the corner. You know, the mafia table, so that no one can come up behind you and whack you with a cannoli.”

Rory: “Whack you with a cannoli? Oh, because he left the gun and took the cannoli.

Lorelai: You’re so my daughter.” (01:56)

The last scene analyzed in chapter 3.2.5. referring to the cannoli is taken from the *CSI: Las Vegas* episode “For Warrick”. Warrick Brown, a member of the CSI team is gunned down in his car by a high-ranking police officer. He can prove that the police officer is corrupt and has ties to criminal organizations. After the murder his colleagues have to examine the car to find evidence. On the passenger seat’s floor mat Nick Stokes and Catherine Willows find a gun, which might be the murder weapon.

Nick: “Warrick's service weapon is still in evidence. He didn't carry a backup.”

Catherine: "It's gotta be the murder weapon."

Nick: "Leave the gun, take the cannoli. This was a hit." (08:36)

The comparison of the crime scene of Warrick's assassination with the scene in *The Godfather* is used to point out that Warrick was not a victim of a random act of violence but that his killing was planned. This assumption is emphasized by the use of the word "hit" in the subsequent sentence. A "hit" is, according to *urbandictionary.com*, a synonym for a contract murder. The allusion to the scene and the thus created connection between the episode of CSI and the target text makes this reference an intertextuality and a reiteration.

### 3.2.6. Bada-bing (1:11:45)

Michael offers to kill Virgil Sollozzo and the corrupt police captain McCluskey because they would not expect him to do so during a meeting where peace and business should be negotiated. His older brother Sonny is not very convinced that Michael can handle this situation so he tries to talk him out of it. The phrase "bada-bing" expresses the sound of a gun and an the Ivy League is, according to *urbandictionary.com*, an athletic conference in the northeast of the United States of America comprising eight private universities including Columbia, Harvard, Princeton, and Yale.

Sonny: "Hey. What're you gonna do, nice college boy? Yeah. D'you wanna get mix up with the family business now? You wanna gun down a police captain cause he slapped you in the face a little bit, huh? What do you think this is, the army? Where you shot 'em a mile away? You gotta get up close

like this {puts his right index finger on Michael's temple}. Bada-Bing, you blow that brains all over your nice ivy-league suit." (1:11:49)

In the *Gilmore Girls*' episode "The Festival of the Living Arts" an annual art festival is about to take place in Stars Hollow. The inhabitants of the small town stage famous pieces of art. The last time the Festival of Living Pictures came to town, seven years ago, Lorelai played the girl from Renoir's painting "Dance at Bougival", but she flinched. So this year, Taylor gave the part to Carol Dandridge. On the other hand, Rory has the perfect face for a new piece, Girolamo Parmigianino's "Portrait of a Young Girl Named Anthea." So one day while folding laundry, Rory reveals to Lorelai her plan to help out her mother:

Rory: "You are going to be the Renoir girl. End of story."

Lorelai: "How?"

Rory: "Well, if they want an Anthea for "Portrait of a Young Girl Named Anthea," then they're going to have to have you for the Renoir girl."

Lorelai: "Well, look at you folding your laundry all haughty and powerful."

Rory: "Bada-bing, all over his nice ivy-league suit." (13:30)

Rory suggests blackmailing the committee responsible for the cast of the pictures. If Lorelai does not get the role as the Renoir girl, she will refuse to be Parmigianino's Anthea. The use of the "Bada-bing"-phrase is a hypertextuality and a reiteration.

Another reference to Sonny's line from *The Godfather* is the name of Tony Soprano's strip club in the series *The Sopranos*. The name of the strip club is

“Bada Bing”. The club is a reoccurring location throughout all six seasons of the TV-show. In terms of Genette’s transtextuality it is a hypertextuality as it transfers the spoken line into the name of a strip club.

### **3.2.7. The Gun behind the toilet...(01:24:00)**

Michael meets Sollozzo and McCluskey in Louis’ Italian-American restaurant. They sit on a table in the center of the restaurant and McCluskey is enjoying his veal while Michael and Sollozzo have a conversation in Sicilian. Michael knows that Clemenza had a gun hidden in the toilet behind the flushing tank. After a few minutes, Michael asks the men if he could go to the bathroom. Sollozzo stops Michael as he goes past him to frisk him for any weapons but McCluskey already did that before they came to the restaurant so they do not suspect him of doing anything treacherous. In the toilet booth Michael takes the gun, which is taped to the back of the flushing tank. He does not find it immediately and panics but after a few seconds he pulls the gun out behind the tank. He flushes the toilet and goes back into the restaurant, stopping only for a second at the restroom door to take a deep breath. He slowly returns to the table and takes a seat. McCluskey is still eating and Sollozzo starts their conversation in Sicilian again. Michael seems very calm but his eyes are restless. He pretends to listen to what Sollozzo is telling him, and after a few seconds he raises the gun and fires one shot into Sollozzo’s forehead. He then turns to McCluskey and shoots again. The police captain is hit in the throat by the first round, which causes him to reach for the wound and to produce a rasping sound. The second bullet fired by Michael does not miss the intended target, McCluskey’s head. With both enemies dead Michael takes his coat, drops the gun and leaves the restaurant. Probably the most striking feature

about the few seconds that Michael spends in the bathroom to get the gun is the use of sound. The grating sound of a train's brakes is audible when Michael is in the toilet and they are again present right before he shoots Sollozzo and McCluskey. This sound serves as a metaphor for Michael Corleone's anxiety prior to the murders. Phillips (103) claims that the sound engineer Walter Murch was asked by Copolla to only use music in the scene after the murders. So Murch decided to add a sound effect just prior to the killings. He employed the screeching effect of a train turning a difficult corner to symbolize Michael's state of mind, as he is about to irrevocably turn a difficult corner himself.

The same sound effect is used in the *Boardwalk Empire's* episode "Home". In one of the final scenes (49:30) of this episode Enoch "Nucky" Thompson is represented in medium close-up standing in the newly renovated kitchen of his father's house. His new girlfriend's son, who is not present in the first shot, accompanies him. Thompson holds the poking stick, which his father used to punish him as a child, and looks at it. Apparently he remembers some traumatic childhood experiences. Outside the house, the sound of a distant steam train can be heard. The cut to the next scene shows him shot over the shoulders of his girlfriend's son. The boy, only visibly blurry in the foreground since the focus lies on Thompson in this shot, is holding a can of gasoline he just found on the kitchen table. The camera slightly pans up to follow Enoch's movement towards the boy. He is again shown alone in medium close up after the next cut. He tells the boy to wait in the car. The next shot is a long shot from the corridor outside the kitchen through the kitchen door and both, Enoch and the boy, are presented in full figure at the kitchen table. The boy leaves the kitchen, and at that moment, the sound of the train becomes more present. Enoch is again shown in a medium close up as



the sound of the train gets nearer and louder until it is dominating the entire scene. Then the sound stops and the scene is cut again. The following sequence is presented as hand-held shooting and it shows Enoch in medium close up from various angles and with multiple cuts as he pours gasoline on the kitchen floor, the table, and the walls. During this short sequence, the sound of a train is again audible. This time, the sound resembles a screeching train that either brakes or takes a difficult turn. A short loud stomp followed by a cut ends the scene on the visual and the audible level. Enoch then stands in the kitchen door, shown in a medium shot from behind, and he lights a match to ignite the gasoline and with it the whole building as the camera slowly zooms out. This reference can be seen as intertextuality regarding Genette's five different types of transtextuality. It is a very exceptional form of intertextuality as the reference is neither of visual nor textual but of audible nature. The same reference is used for the above-mentioned dramatic effects in another episode of *Boardwalk Empire*.

The following three examples contain different references to the above-mentioned scene from *The Godfather*. All of them are, despite their different presentations, categorized as hypertextuality and as reiteration. *The Sopranos* episode "The Test Dream" is presented as one of Tony Soprano's dreams where his subconscious deals with his all of his problems and fears. In one sequence of the dream, Tony sits in an Italian restaurant with his family, a police officer, who worked for him in the past, and the officer's wife. Tony and the police officer go to the bathroom together. In the bathroom, Tony reaches behind the flushing tank like Michael does in *The Godfather* (32:45). Unlike Michael, Tony does not find a gun behind the flushing tank.

In the *Gilmore Girls* episode "Driving Miss Gilmore" Lorelai and Rory are at Lorelai's mother for dinner. They are having spaghetti and meatballs. Lorelai and Rory are engaged in a rather lively discussion. Apparently they always fight when that particular dish is served. Her mother and her father then tell Lorelai that they had lunch with Christopher, who is Rory's father, the other night. Lorelai's father calls it a sit-down. Lorelai answers him, referring to the hidden gun in the bathroom in *The Godfather*.

Lorelai: "A sit-down? What, did you get Clemenza to hide a gun in the bathroom first?" (02:15)

Again Lorelai exaggerates her relationship with her parents by using a reference taken from *The Godfather*.

In the *CSI: Las Vegas* episode "Viva Las Vegas" a man gets shot in a bar. The bar has a very high security standard and all its customers have to go through a metal detector before they enter. Grissom and Sanders have to find out how the gun could get past the detectors. Traces on the gun itself lead them to the toilet of the club where they discover that someone had hidden the gun behind a flushing tank.

Sanders: "So the shooter stuck the gun in the toilet earlier to avoid the metal detector."

Grissom: "Echoes of Michael Corleone." (30:10)

### 3.2.8. Santino rage and his death at the tollbooth

Santino finds out that his sister Conny was once again abused by her husband Carlo Rizzi. Instances of domestic violence had happened before but Connie always played them down. Rizzi has a very loose temper and treats her in a very bad way. After Sonny finds his sister at her flat with a black eye and bruises all over her arms he drives to the place where Carlo works, even though Connie begs him to leave her husband alone. Without any warning Sonny jumps out of his car and runs after his brother-in-law to bring him to self-administered justice. He also threatened to kill him if he ever dares to lay hands on his sister again. *The Simpsons'* episode "Strong Arms of The Ma" has restaged almost the entire scene.



figure 35



figure 36

Marge got robbed behind the Kwik-E-Mart and develops a phobia, which forces her to stay in the basement of the family house. That is where she starts to work out with some weights. Her muscles grow bigger and bigger every day. One day she conquers her fears and gets out of the basement. Happy to be out she starts running around the city. Suddenly she meets the man who got her into her phobia. Instead of backing down she gives the man a decent beating (12:58). The connection to *The Godfather* here is that the alley where Marge beats the robber is

drawn to look exactly like the alley in *The Godfather*, where Santino Corleone punishes his brother-in-law Carlo Rizzi for abusing Santino's sister Connie. First of all, the scene is presented in the same camera angles as the original scene. Most of the fight is shown in a long shot, the camera placed on the pavement to capture a bit of the street, the pavement and the walls of the building on the right side of the frame. Only the moment when the robber holds onto the handrail and Marge bites his hand (compare fig. 35 and fig. 37) is shot in medium close up. All the elements of the fight are copied in the exact same manner. Marge throws the man over a handrail, smacks his head on the same handrail, bites his hand as he holds the handrail, smashes a garbage can onto his back, uses the top of the garbage can to hit the robber's head a few times and then she kicks him from the sidewalk right into a dirty puddle on the street, caused by a leaking hydrant. This leaking hydrant is but one part of the original setting which also got remodeled in a detail-loving way. In figure 38 (see also fig. 36) one can see that many details were taken from the original scene such as the beer truck in the back, the posters on the brick wall, the bystanders on the pavement and on the stairway in the back of the scene and the leaking hydrant on the right side of the frame. The beer truck was replaced with a truck labeled Duff, the most popular beer brand in Springfield. In the original scene the bystanders are unknown people in the streets of New York, whereas the bystanders in *The Simpsons* episode are the well-known residents such as Carl, Professor Frink, Lenny, Jasper, Apu, Moe and Mrs. Lovejoy.



figure 37



figure 38

The whole scene can be seen as hypertextuality in terms of Genette's theory of transtextuality.

Apparently Carlo Rizzi hasn't learned his lesson. A couple of weeks after Sonny punished Carlo for abusing his sister, Connie calls her mother to speak to her. Misses Corleone is busy and barely understands her daughter so she hand the phone to Sonny. He immediately recognizes that something is wrong with his sister. She tells him that Carlo has beaten her again. Outraged Sonny gets in his car to drive to his sister, who told him about her husband's actions. Unfortunately for Sonny, this time his sister wasn't the victim of a random act of domestic violence. This time it was a plan, using Sonny's temper and protective instinct against him, to set him up.

The tollbooth on the way from Long Island to New York is shown in a long shot when Sonny's car arrives there. Another car is driving right before Sonny. The tollbooth, a bar, a yellow stop sign and the two cars are visible. The camera pans from left to right to follow the cars to the tollbooth. Both cars stop. A cut then shows Sonny, shot in medium close up from the passenger seat, behind the steering wheel searching for some change for the tollbooth. Through the driver's

window the tollbooth and the toll officer are visible. Sonny hands the officer the toll fee (see fig. 39). A shot through the car's windshield shows the other car backing towards Sonny's car and thereby blocking it after a cut. A cut back to the passenger seat view presents a rather confused Sonny and the toll officer taking cover in the tollbooth. The tollbooth on the other side of the road is shown in a long shot after a cut. Four gunmen appear in the windows of the tollbooth (see fig. 40). Cut back to Sonny who now seems to recognize the ambush. Cut to the windshield perspective. Two men with machineguns get out of the car that is blocking Sonny's. Cut back to Sonny. Again cut back to the windshield perspective. The gunmen fire at Sonny's car. The windshield gets hit several times (see fig. 41). The following seconds show a couple of very fast cuts between the tollbooth, the blocking car and Sonny's car while Sonny and his car are under heavy machinegun fire. During this sequence of fast cuts Sonny manages to get out of the car. His body gets hit multiple times. A medium close up shows him getting hit by a few bullets and then falling down on the floor. One of the gunmen steps forward and fires a last round at his already dead body (see fig. 42). As a final act of humiliation the gunman kicks Sonny in the face. A cut to a long shot of the tollbooth shows the gunmen heading to their cars to flee the crime scene. In the back another approaching car gets visible. This is Tom Hagen and some of Sonny's men who followed him, assuming that something is wrong. On their arrival at the tollbooth they find nothing but Sonny's dead body. Phillips claims (104) that the tollbooth massacre was inspired by a scene from Arthur Penn's movie *Bonnie and Clyde* in which the protagonists Bonnie and Clyde, played by Faye Dunaway and Warren Beatty, die during a shootout with the police.



figure 39



figure 40



figure 41



figure 42

Homer works as a snowplow driver in *The Simpsons*' episode "Mr. Plow". Due to his work the school bus makes it to Springfield Elementary despite a terrible blizzard. The other children, who were looking forward to have a day off, are angry with Bart as a result of Homer's work. They, after appearing behind a snowy hill wearing ski masks (see fig. 42), shoot him with snowballs (10:57). The way Bart gets hit by the snowballs and shakes his body at their impact is copied from Santino's death scene at the tollbooth in *The Godfather* (see fig. 43). This scene is therefore a hypertextuality and a reiteration on the level of lexicon.



figure 43



figure 44

*The Simpsons'* episode "All's Fair in Oven War" features James Caan, who played Santino Corleone in *The Godfather*, in a cameo appearance. The actor lends his voice to his cartooned self. Marge takes part in a baking competition where the winner will be in the new advertisement campaign for a flour company. Unfortunately Marge loses the contest to Brandine, Cletus' wife. Cletus and his family are portrait as hillbillies and are among the regular cast of *The Simpsons*. Brandine ran off with James Caan, who was one of the jury members, after the contest. But Cletus has a plan. James Caan and Brandine are driving in a convertible until they reach a tollbooth (20:27). The scene is a one-to-one copy of the original scene from that point onwards, the only difference is that the gunmen aren't Italian mobsters but hillbillies just like Cletus (compare fig.45-48 with fig. 39-42). On the one hand this scene is, according to Stam, Burgoyne, and Flitterman-Lewis categories, a celebrity intertextuality. James Caan appears in a scene similar to his character's death scene in *The Godfather*. On the other hand the scene is a reiteration on all three levels. The transformation of the gangsters into hillbillies with machineguns is a misdirection on the level of lexicon.





figure 45



figure 46



figure 47



figure 48

### 3.2.9. Don Corleone asking Bonasera to repay the favor (1:56:58)

After Tom Hagen informs the Don about the death of his eldest son he remains very calm and reasonable. He just sighs for a short moment and seems to break out in tears but then he pulls himself together and says: "I want all inquiries made. I want no acts of vengeance. I want you to arrange a meeting, with the head of the Five Families. This war stops now" (1:55:52). He also asks Hagen to call Bonasera, the mortician. The moment to repay the granted favor has arrived. Tom tells Bonasera, that he owes the Don a service now and that he should await their arrival at his funeral parlor in one hour. During Hagen's call with Bonasera the scene ends and a cut presents an ego perspective point of view, presumably that of Vito Corleone, within a downward moving elevator. The iron-sliding gate of the elevator is visible and through it Bonasera in a medium shot appears. As the

elevator moves downward the point-of-view does not move along with the elevator but focuses on Bonasera's eyes (see fig. 48). Someone opens the door after the elevator stops and a cut then moves on to an over-the-shoulder shot of Bonasera showing two men carrying a body, Tom Hagen and Vito Corleone coming out. Bonasera is still not quite sure how to pay back the Don's favor, so he asks him, what he wants him to do. Don Vito shows him his son's dead body and asks him to use all his powers and all his skills because he doesn't want his wife to see their son this way.



figure 49

The scene at the mortician is imitated in *The Sopranos* episode "Proshai, Livushka". Tony Soprano's mother is dead and he has to take care of her funeral. Tony and his siblings are in an elevator that goes downstairs (24:58). The point of view presented is shot from within the elevator. It is the exact same scene as in the first *Godfather* movie, when Don Vito comes to Bonasera to ask him to bury Santino. The elevator has the same iron-sliding gate, the mortician looks like Bonasera and the point-of-view camera angle is exactly the same (see fig. 50). This is an example for a reiteration on the levels of lexicon, syntax and style. The elevator and the mortician represent the lexical reiteration whereas the fact that

they are there to arrange a funeral is on the syntax level. The copied camera angle here is an example for a reiteration on the level of style.



figure 50

### 3.2.10. Don Vito's death (2:24:19)

Oranges are of very prominent yet dark significance in the movie. Almost every time they appear it is an indication for an important death scene. At the dining table in Jack Woltz's mansion a bowl of oranges is placed between him and Tom Hagen. Vito Corleone is buying oranges from a fruit seller on the street right before he is attacked by Sollozzo's men. On his way to the turnpike tollbooth Sonny drives past a billboard advertising Florida Oranges just before he is gunned down. Oranges are placed on the table at the meeting of the Mafia bosses, especially in front of those ones who will be assassinated at the movie's climax. There are even more examples in the two sequels of *The Godfather*. An important scene in the first part is the death of the Don. Vito Corleone plays with his grandson in the vegetable garden. He carves teeth into an orange wedge to playfully scare the child (see fig. 51). While they are playing tag (see fig. 52) the Don suffers a heart attack, which kills him. Coppola claims in the audio-commentary on the DVD

(2:24:20), that it was difficult to work with the little child who plays Corleone's grandson. He would not follow any directions. Brando came up with the idea with the orange slices. Apparently he said, that he himself calms his children this way. Brando's idea worked and the team could continue their work.



figure 51



figure 52

Figures 53 – 55 are screenshots from *The Simpson's* episode "Moe Baby Blues". Figure 56 is taken from the *Pinky and Brain* episode "Brainwashed Part 3: Wash Harder". In those first two pictures Moe, the barkeeper, and Fat Tony put an orange wedge with carved out teeth into their mouths. Moe does so while he tells the whole story of *The Godfather* to Maggie. Fat Tony wants to calm down his frightened men. In figure 55 and 56 two different comic versions of Vito Corleone himself are shown with the orange in his mouth. All of these references are reiterations on the level of lexicon.



figure 53



figure 54



figure 55



figure 56

### 3.2.11. Never ask me about my business (2:42:40)

After the Don's death, Michael and his men manage to get rid of all their enemies in one afternoon, while Connie and Carlo's second child gets baptized. Carlo also pays with his life for his responsibility of Sonny's death. Michael's sister Connie confronts him with the death of her husband Carlo. She accuses him in his office of having him murdered. Kay, Michael's wife is also present at the scene. Connie calls him a cold-hearted bastard and tells Kay to read the papers, to find out, who her husband really is. One of Michael's men drags the furious Connie out of the room. Kay remains in the room with Michael and asks him about these accusations. Michael responds in anger that she should never ask him about his business again. He then agrees to get asked one question. Kay wants to know if he is involved in the murder of Carlo and Michael negates it, which is a lie. She leaves the room and looks back over her shoulder to see Michael surrounded by

some of his men (see fig. 57). In his moment she realizes that Connie was right and that her husband became the true successor of his father. One of Michael's men walks towards the open door, looks at Kay and closes the door (see fig. 58). This is the final scene of the movie.



figure 57



figure 58

In the *Weeds* episode “The Godmother”, Nancy Price Botwin, the protagonist of the series, gets more and more involved in dealing with Marijuana. She started dealing out of financial problems. At the end of the episode she has put together a team to help her with her growing business. All the team members are assembled on Nancy's porch. Shane, Nancy's younger son, is worried about his mom and asks her, what is going on. She appeases him and tells him that everything is fine and that she invited all those people because she felt lonely. She leaves the kitchen for the porch and leaves Shane puzzled (25:30). At that point, a tune similar to *The Godfather* waltz sets in. Shane is shown in a Head and Shoulders shot from an above angle, his eyes are following his leaving mother. Cut to an Over the Shoulder shot shows Nancy leaving the kitchen through the porch door (see fig. 59). All the people on the porch gather around her and one of them hands her a hemp seedling. The Godfather-like music still continues. A cut back to Shane who still stands in the kitchen and observes the scene. Cut back to the porch door.

A woman takes a look at Shane, shakes her head and then slowly closes the door wings (see fig. 60). The last shot shows Shane's face disappearing behind the closing door.



figure 59



figure 60

The episode “The Mook, the Chef, the Wife and her Homer” of *The Simpsons* is centered on the character of Michael, the son of Springfield’s mafia boss Fat Tony. After Bart captures the school bus, Otto, the driver, gets temporarily suspended. Now the parents have to drive their children to school in a carpool and that is how Michael is introduced. Marge picks him at his parent’s house where the other children figure out that he is the son of Fat Tony. From that moment on the children at school fear him. Only Lisa dares speaking with him. The character of Michael is a reference to Michael Corleone. Just like Michael Corleone, Fat Tony’s son does not want to be involved in his father’s business, which according to the episode is waste management. He wants to become a chef. Tony picks up the children to bring them to school. During the car ride the song *Woke Up This Morning* from the British group *Alabama 3* is played. This song accompanies the opening credits of the TV-show *The Sopranos*.

Michael invites the Simpsons to his father's house. During the dinner Fat Tony's enemies, the Calabresis, arrive at the mansion. They are here for a sit down, so Tony leaves his invited guests. The Calabresis say that the fact that Fat Tony takes part in the daily carpool makes him look weak so they tried to assassinate him. The situation clears and Fat Tony and his enemies are at peace unless Michael enters the sit down with some self-made dessert. He tells his father that he wants to become a chef in front of the Calabresis. This again makes Tony look weak in the eyes of the Calabresis and they attack him with a helicopter. This is a reference to a scene in *The Godfather III*, where during a meeting of Michael Corleone and his business partners gunfire from a helicopter kills almost everyone at that meeting. Fat Tony is brought to a hospital and Michael promises to take over the family business. Homer and Bart are willing to help Michael. Homer says that he knows everything about being a mob boss from the greatest gangster movie ever. According to him that movie is *Shark Tale*. In the next scene Homer is doing some racketeering in Moe's Tavern. He thereby wears a red tracksuit and a couple of golden chains around his neck. This is an imitation of Pauli "Walnuts" Gualtieri, a character from *The Sopranos*. As Homer and Bart are getting more and more attracted to the criminal lifestyle, Michael pulls the plug. He tells them that he is going to end all illegal business. So he calls in a meeting with the other crime bosses of Springfield to hand them over all his father's territory in exchange for the safety of his family and the Simpsons. As it turns out, this meeting at the Simpson's house was a trap. The food Michael served the other gangsters was poisoned. Lisa thinks it was an accident and confronts Michael. In response he says to her: "Don't ever ask me about my business, Lisa" (20:17). He then leaves for another room and the door is closed in front of her (see fig. 61).





figure 61



figure 62

Figure 62 is another screenshot from the episode “Moe Baby Blues”. Moe tells Maggie, the Simpsons’ baby, the whole story of *The Godfather*. This screenshot shows Moe closing the door on a doll sitting in the hallway. Moe finishes his story with the words “Michael is the new godfather and he shuts the door on Annie Hall” (11:50). *Annie Hall* is a romantic comedy from 1977, directed by Woody Allen and starring Diane Keaton as Annie Hall. Diane Keaton is also the actress who plays Kay Adams in *The Godfather*. The online-archive *Imdb.com* informs, that Keaton received an Academy Award in 1978 for the role in the Woody Allen movie, which he especially wrote for her. This reference is a special form of celebrity intertextuality as a character, played by an actress, is mentioned in a reference while the reference actually aims at another character played by the same actress. In terms of Harries’ parodic methods this is a reiteration on the levels of lexicon, syntax and style. It is also an extraneous inclusion as a doll replaces the character of Kay Adams.

### 3.2.12. Other references

In this final subchapter a couple of other references are mentioned. Those references include other impersonations, the mentioning of characters, music and criticism.

#### 3.2.12.1. Other impersonations

All of the examples mentioned below are impersonations of different characters from *The Godfather*. They are all categorized as hypertextuality and as reiteration on the lexical level.

In the *Seinfeld* episode “The Bris”, Jerry and Elaine visit some friends at the hospital. Myra just gave birth to her son and her husband tells Jerry and Elaine that they were chosen to be his son’s godparents.

SP1: “Myra and I would like you and Elaine to be the godparents of Steven.”

Elaine: “Wow.”

Jerry: “Me? A godfather?”

SP1: “Yes.”

Jerry: “Never go against the family Elaine.”

Elaine: “What?”

Elaine: “So anyway. Tell us what’s involved in being a godparent.”

Jerry: “Never ask me about my business. Godfather?” (03:07)

Both sentences spoken by Jerry Seinfeld here are lines spoken by Michael Corleone in *The Godfather*. The first one is addressed to his brother Fredo after the meeting with Moe Greene in Las Vegas. The second one is an order to his wife Kay towards the end of the movie.

In *The Sopranos* episode “Guy Walks Into Psychiatrist Office”, Tony and his friends and business associates are playing pool in a backroom of the Bada-Bing and they all are in a good mood. Pussy, who has been away for a long time, asks Sal to do his famous Godfather impersonations.

Pussy: “Hey Sal.”

Sal: “What?”

Pussy: “What? I’ve been gone a long time. Let me hear it.”

Sal: “Just when I thought I was out, they pull me back in. All right Kay, just this one time I’ll let you ask me about my affairs. Is it true, Michael? No, you fucking schifosa. Our true enemy has yet to reveal himself.” (21:12)

Sal’s impersonation is a mixture of references to the first and the third part. “Just when I thought I was out...” is spoken by Michael Corleone in the third part of the saga. “All right Kay,...” is again a reference to the final scene of the first part and “Our true enemy...” is another line from the original *Godfather*.

After having lost money buying a basketball team Mister Burns is no longer a billionaire in *The Simpsons* episode “The Burns and The Bees”. At one of the meetings at the billionaire’s club he gets expelled. Aware of what is going to happen he turns to one of the members and says the following sentence.

Mr. Burns: "Mark, can you get me off the hook? For old times sake?"

Mark: "Can't do it Monty." (20:15)

The line "for old times' sake" was spoken by Tessio towards the end of *The Godfather*. Tessio turns out to be the traitor who was bought by Barzini. Michael Corleone, with the help of his father found out about his betrayal and ordered Tessio's execution. In the scene where the killers come to pick up Tessio, he turns to Tom Hagen, Corleone's right hand, and says the same words. In both, *The Simpsons* and *The Godfather*, the line symbolizes a beg for mercy.

The *Navy C.I.S.* episode "The Bone Yard", the team is surveying a mob warehouse and they are talking about a snitch that works for the mob but also for the authorities. One of the agents calls the snitch Abe. Abe Vigoda was the actor who played Salvatore Tessio in *The Godfather*. Two of the agents start the following conversation:

SP1: "Hello Abe."

SP2: "Abe?"

SP1: "As in Vigoda. It's the FBI call sign for him."

SP2: "Ah yeah. Does sort of look like him. Tom, can you get me off? For old times' sake?"

SP1: "Sorry Sali. No can do."

SP2: <cries>

SP3: "You two through?" (22:08)

### 3.2.12.2. Mentioning of other characters

Fredo Corleone, the Don's second eldest son, is generally considered a very weak personality who is not capable of running the family business. The following two examples are referring to this circumstance. All of them are hypertextualities and reiterations.

In the *Rosanne* episode "Take My Bike. Please.", Dan and Rosanne are both working hard at Dan's Motorcycle shop and they do not have enough time to take care of the kids. So Rosanne asks her eldest daughter Becky to take care of the household and her younger siblings. Rosanne compares her eldest daughter to Fredo Corleone.

Rosanne: "Are you insane? I just put Becky in charge. That's like putting Fredo in charge of the Corleone family?" (07:10)

Another character that gets compared to Fredo Corleone is Alan Harper, Charlie Harper's younger brother in *Two And A Half Men*. This reference is actually targeting at *The Godfather II*. Fredo has betrayed his brother and Michael wants revenge for that but as he does not want to break his mother's heart he insists his men not to harm him as long as Mrs. Corleone is still alive. In the *Two And A Half Men* episode "Don't Worry Speed Racer", Alan is annoying as usual so Bertha, the housekeeper, and Charlie are discussing if he should leave the house or not.

Bertha: "He's gotta go, Charlie."

Charlie: "What am I gonna do, Bertha? He's my brother."

Bertha: "We can make it look like an accident."

Charlie: "No, no accidents! As long as my mother's alive, nothing happens to Fredo." (03:30)

Two other characters mentioned in a TV-show are Barzini and Tattaglia, the names of two rivaling mob families of the Corleone family. In the episode "Everybody Hates Bombthreats" from the series *Everybody Hates Chris*, Chris is forced to learn the inaugural speech of President William Henry Harrison by heart for misbehavior in class. Minutes before he is supposed to speak in class he calls the police to make a bomb threat at his high school, the Tattaglia High (08:30). Chris tells his family that the bomb threat was a hoax. On the TV a report shows that a bomb actually blew up a high school – the Barzini High (19:35). The use of the character's names as names for High Schools can also be seen as extraneous inclusion.

### **3.2.12.3. Music**

Nino Rota is the composer responsible for the original score of *The Godfather*. His music was nominated for an Academy Award in 1973 but removed from the list at the last minute. The reason for that, according to *imdb.com*, was the fact that the score had already been used in the movie *Fortunella* in 1953. Nevertheless Rota received an Academy Award for Best Score in 1974 for *The Godfather II*, even though the music did not differ much from the first part. The famous melody is inevitable tied to *The Godfather* and to Vito Corleone in particular. The appearance of gangsters in TV-shows is often accompanied by the use of a similar

tune. The following example taken from a *Simpsons* episode features the original score of *The Godfather* in an unconventional way.

In *The Simpsons* episode “Homie The Clown”, a huge advertisement sign along the highway makes Homer go to the clown-college. There he learns all the necessary means to become a professional clown and a Krusty-the-Clown impersonator. Homer has to pretend to be Krusty on several occasions, like children’s parties and openings of Krustyburger franchises. Known through his previous appearances the real Krusty likes to gamble and has ties to the local mobsters. Krusty has some gambling debts and so the mobsters want him dead. But instead of him they kidnap Homer dressed up as Krusty. In the clubhouse it comes to the showdown. Don Vittorio Dimaggio, the head of the Springfield mafia chapter, is a great Krusty-fan, and so he offers him a chance to stay alive. He asks him to show him his favorite trick where he rides the little bike through a loop. Unfortunately Homer never managed to perform this trick without failing in clown-college. And now, facing his death, he fails again. Just before DiMaggio pulls the trigger, the real Krusty appears. Confused by the presence of two Krusties the mobsters decide to kill them both unless they manage the trick with the tiny bike and the loop together. They have to do it. Krusty rides the bike while Homer sits on his shoulders (20:30). As Homer blindfolds Krusty with his hands they miss the loop but make it on top of the billiard table through a cue. From the billiard table they make it to the bar. Riding along the bar Homer’s head bumps against empty glasses hanging from the bar’s ceiling. These twelve glasses play the melody of *The Godfather* theme (see fig. 63). In terms of Genette’s theory of transtextuality it is a hypertextuality and concerning Harries’ “parodic methods” the use of the melody can be labeled as literalization on the level of style.



figure 63

#### 3.2.12.4. Criticism

Most of the criticism concerning *The Godfather* found in TV-shows target at the last part of the saga. As already mentioned in a preceding chapter, *The Godfather III* is seen as the least acceptable one, compared to its successful prequels. The following three examples present different forms of this kind of criticism. All of them are metatextualities and exaggerations.

In the *Cheers* episode “Bar Wars IV”, another bar opens next to the Cheers, so the gang pranks the owners as a welcoming. Unfortunately the owners of the new bar take the prank very serious and plant a small bomb on the Cheers’ front door. The policeman who talks to Sam tells him that the owner of the bar is a well-known mafia boss called Carpaccio. All the people in the bar discuss the fact that they pranked a mafia boss.

Frasier: “If I may interject, you’ve all seen too many Godfather movies.”

Woody: “I agree, I should’ve stopped at two.” (10:33)



In *The Simpsons* episode “Moe Baby Blues”, Fat Tony claims the following at the climax.

Fat Tony: “I haven’t cried like this since I paid to see *The Godfather III*.”  
(19:51)

The two examples taken from *Cheers* and *The Simpsons* target at the bad reception of *The Godfather III* and exaggerate it whereas the last example, taken from *The Sopranos* episode “A Hit is a Hit” tries to contradict the criticism. Here the rapper Massive claims to like and to have understood it.

Massive: “You people are all right. Godfather. I’ve seen that movie 200 times. Godfather II was definitely the shit. The third one, a lot of people didn’t like it, but I think it was just misunderstood (8:40)”.



#### 4. Conclusion

“The day, they don’t make fun of you, that means they don’t give a damn about you.” Sammy Davis Jr.

With *The Godfather*, Francis Ford Coppola created more than a movie. He created a classic and thereby redefined a genre and its impact and influence on popular culture is still measurable and can be seen forty years later. With *The Godfather* Coppola created a villain and hero at the same time; a “bad guy” the audience can identify with. Camon claims (70) that

[a]lthough the tradition of the gangster film required a hero that we as an audience could clearly constitute as “other” from us – pathological, morally reproachable – so as to reinforce our identity by opposition, *The Godfather* gives us a man that we want to be, or that we can’t help being. As much as we enjoyed his affirmations of power [...], we empathize with his suffering the consequences.

The movie changed the public opinion and the perception of the mafia. More importantly, it also changed the way the mafia perceived itself. Camon further claims (70ff) that even though the criminals are depicted as cruel and unrefined, “the classy aura of *The Godfather* seemed to stick to the role enough” to make young criminals want to become their archetype. He mentions (71) John Gotti, one of the most prominent and notorious mafia gangsters of recent years in the United States as “exemplary product of this evolution”.

Despite the renegotiation of the perception of organized crime *The Godfather* also influenced directors, screenwriters, and actors. It is the hypothesis of this thesis to prove, that references to *The Godfather* can be found in contemporary US-American TV-shows. All the references and allusions given in the practical part of this thesis confirm this hypothesis and also point out the lasting significance of the original movie. The TV-shows used for the thesis roughly comprehend some of the most successful ones within the last thirty years. The allusions concerning *The Godfather* appear on a regular basis, no matter how far away the TV-shows are from the original on a temporary basis.

With the help of the work of Gerard Genette and Dan Harries it was possible to analyze and categorize these references. As already claimed it is not always easy to attribute one of the given categories to a reference since the constraints are defined rather loose. However, to sum up the practical part it can be said that the vast majority of the analyzed allusions occur as hypertextualities in terms of Genette's theory of transtextuality and as reiteration in terms of Harries' "parodic methods".

If these allusions will still occur in future TV-shows cannot be told with certainty but it is a fact that during the process of writing this diploma thesis the author happened to come across allusions in very recent TV-shows such as *How I Met Your Mother* and *Boardwalk Empire*.

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## **Pictures and Screenshots used**

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## **Movie posters**

figure 1:

[http://4.bp.blogspot.com/\\_WkKZJVG5wTk/TRyHL4XKsAI/AAAAAAC5oY/v56ddqAwOGc/s1600/Godfather001.jpg](http://4.bp.blogspot.com/_WkKZJVG5wTk/TRyHL4XKsAI/AAAAAAC5oY/v56ddqAwOGc/s1600/Godfather001.jpg) (last accessed 19 July 2011)

figure 2: <http://perfectgiftforless.com/cs/12601.jpg> (last accessed 19 July 2011)

figure 3:

[http://1.bp.blogspot.com/\\_6SchU8De1s/SYrzznmKt9I/AAAAAAAIts/48NFCBaT7ww/s400/God\\_Vader.jpg](http://1.bp.blogspot.com/_6SchU8De1s/SYrzznmKt9I/AAAAAAAIts/48NFCBaT7ww/s400/God_Vader.jpg) (last accessed 19 July 2011)

## **Screenshots from *The Godfather***

figure 4: Bonasera in Vito Corleone’s office (0:03:02)

figure 5: The Don behind his desk (0:04:37)

figure 9: Corleone’s most prominent gesture (0:04:05)

figure 17: Woltz’s mansion at dawn (0:31:20)

figure 18: bloody wake-up (0:31:28)

figure 19: a surprise underneath the blanket (0:32:45)

- figure 31: Luca Brasi is the choking victim (0:41:54)
- figure 33: "Leave the gun, take the cannoli." (0:55:38)
- figure 35: Sonny's mad at his brother-in-law (1:44:17)
- figure 36: public humiliation (1:44:32)
- figure 39: paying the toll fee (1:52:51)
- figure 40: the gunmen appear (1:53:00)
- figure 41: there's nowhere to escape (1:53:03)
- figure 42: dead and gone on the concrete (1:53:25)
- figure 49: at the undertaker's (1:57:04)
- figure 51: playing in the garden (2:25:54)
- figure 52: only a few more seconds to live (2:26:02)
- figure 57: Michael becomes the new godfather (2:45:40)
- figure 58: Kay stands in front of the closing door (2:45:57)

### **Screenshots from TV-shows**

- figure 6: Star Trek: Deep Space Nine. Season 1, Episode 11 (32:42)
- figure 7: Star Trek: Deep Space Nine. Season 1, Episode 11 (32:58)
- figure 8: Freakazoid. Season 2, Episode 2 (02:15)
- figure 10: The Simpsons. Season 12, Episode 9 (04:06)
- figure 11: The Fresh Prince of Bel Air. Season 4, Episode 3 (20:46)
- figure 12: Married With Children. Season 5, Episode 13 (13:54)
- figure 13: Full House. Season 6, Episode 1 (09:12)
- figure 14: The Nanny. Season 3, Episode 13 (11:24)
- figure 15: The A-Team, Season 3, Episode 7 (32:27)
- figure 20: Futurama. Bender's Big Score (04:49)
- figure 21: The Simpsons. Season 1, Episode 8 (15:05)

- figure 22: The Simpsons. Season 1, Episode 8 (15:13)
- figure 23: The Simpsons. Season 3, Episode 8 (11:43)
- figure 24: The Simpsons. Season 3, Episode 8 (11:53)
- figure 25: Arrested Development. Season 3, Episode 4 (13:11)
- figure 26: Arrested Development. Season 3, Episode 4 (13:16)
- figure 27: King Of Queens. Season 4, Episode 5 (12:17)
- figure 28: The Nanny. Season 3, Episode 13 (11:50)
- figure 29: How I Met Your Mother. Season 6, Episode 7 (18:20)
- figure 30: How I Met Your Mother. Season 6, Episode 7 (18:21)
- figure 32: How I Met Your Mother. Season 4, Episode 24 (14:20)
- figure 34: Everybody Hates Chris. Season 4, Episode 17 (8:49)
- figure 37: The Simpsons. Season 14, Episode 9 (13:10)
- figure 38: The Simpsons. Season 14, Episode 9 (13:13)
- figure 43: The Simpsons. Season 4, Episode 9 (11:02)
- figure 44: The Simpsons. Season 4, Episode 9 (11:06)
- figure 45: The Simpsons. Season 16, Episode 2 (20:37)
- figure 46: The Simpsons. Season 16, Episode 2 (20:40)
- figure 47: The Simpsons. Season 16, Episode 2 (20:42)
- figure 48: The Simpsons. Season 16, Episode 2 (20:51)
- figure 50: The Sopranos. Season 3, Episode 2 (25:02)
- figure 53: The Simpsons. Season 14, Episode 22 (11:27)
- figure 54: The Simpsons. Season 14, Episode 22 (15:48)
- figure 55: The Simpsons. Season 14, Episode 22 (17:41)
- figure 56: Pinky And The Brain. Season 4, Episode 3 (03:05)
- figure 59: Weeds. Season 1, Episode 10 (26:19)
- figure 60: Weeds. Season 1, Episode 10 (26:30)

figure 61: The Simpsons. Season 18, Episode 1 (20:27)

figure 62: The Simpsons. Season 14, Episode 22 (11:52)

figure 63: The Simpsons. Season 6, Episode15 (20:33)



## 6. German Abstract

Die hier vorliegende Diplomarbeit stellt die theoretischen Konzepte der Intertextualität und die der Parodie anhand von praktischen Beispielen, entnommen bekannten US-amerikanischen TV-Sendungen, dar. Dementsprechend ist die Arbeit in einen theoretischen und einen praktischen Teil gegliedert.

Der erste Teil umreißt kurz die Entwicklung der Theorie der Intertextualität von ihrem Ursprung in der Antike bis hin zur Definition im 20. Jahrhundert durch die Schriften Michael Bakhtins und deren Entdeckung und Interpretation durch Julia Kristeva. Der Weiterentwicklung und Verfeinerung des Konzepts durch Gerard Genette unter dem Namen Transtextualität ist ein großer Teil des theoretischen Kapitels gewidmet. Seine Gliederung in Intertextualität, Paratextualität, Metatextualität, Architextualität and Hypertextualität findet im praktischen Teil genauso Anwendung wie die ebenfalls in einem theoretischen Kapitel vorgestellten Methoden der Parodie von Dan Harries. Auf seinen sechs verschiedenen Interpretationen, wie Parodie in Filmen und TV-Sendungen zur Anwendung kommt, beruht der zweite große Augenmerk der Theorie dieser Arbeit. Wiederholung, Umkehr, Irreführung, Literalisierung, Einbeziehung von Außen and Übertreibung sind laut Harries diese sechs unterschiedlichen Arten der Parodie. Ein kurzer Überblick der Entwicklung von Parodie in US-amerikanischen TV-Sendungen stellt den Zusammenhang zu dem danach folgenden praktischen Teil her.

Allen praktischen Beispielen, anhand derer die Theorie erklärt wird, liegt der Film *Der Pate* vom Regisseur Francis Ford Coppola zu Grunde. Zu Beginn des zweiten Teils dieser Arbeit wird der Film, seine Entwicklung und sein Einfluss kurz dargestellt. Eine ebenfalls kurze Inhaltsangabe ruft die Geschehnisse des Films in Erinnerung ehe einzelne Szenen des Films, chronologisch angeordnet, mit den jeweils korrespondierenden Referenz-Szenen, das heißt mit jenen Szenen aus den TV-Sendungen, in denen auf den Original-Film und eine spezielle Szene daraus Bezug genommen wird, vorgestellt und der zuvor erklärten Theorie entsprechend analysiert werden.

Generell wird mit dieser Diplomarbeit bewiesen, dass sowohl Intertextualität als auch Parodie in allen im theoretischen Teil vorgestellten Subformen vorkommen und auch als solche zuzuordnen sind. Jedoch gibt es in der Wissenschaft, speziell was die Intertextualität anbelangt, noch keinen einheitlichen Kurs oder einen theoretischen Konsens, und so sind viele Grenzen zwischen den von Genette definierten Subformen seiner "Transtextualität" schwammig und lassen in manchen Fällen verschiedene Interpretationsmöglichkeiten zu. Das selbe trifft auf die von Dan Harries entwickelten sechs Methoden der Parodie zu. Auch hier ist es eine Zuordnung in manchen Fällen nicht exakt durchführbar.

*Der Pate* wurde deshalb als Original-Film für diese Arbeit herangezogen, weil er gemeinsam mit George Lucas' *Star Wars*-Saga der wohl am öftesten referenzierte Film in der jüngeren Fernsehgeschichte ist.

## 7. Curriculum Vitae

### Persönliche Angaben

<b>Geburtstag</b>	15. Mai 1979
<b>Geburtsort</b>	Wien
<b>Staatsbürgerschaft</b>	Österreich
<b>Religion</b>	o.B.
<b>Familienstand</b>	Ledig

### Schulische Ausbildung

<b>1985 – 1989</b>	Volksschule Heidenreichstein
<b>1989 – 1993</b>	Gymnasium Waidhofen/Thaya
<b>1993 – 1999</b>	Handelsakademie Waidhofen/Thaya
<b>2000 – 2011</b>	Studium der Anglistik und Amerikanistik sowie der Geschichte an der Universität Wien

### Berufliche Erfahrungen

<b>August 2010:</b>	Dreiwöchiges Praktikum als Redaktionsassistent in der Sportredaktion der Krone Zeitung
<b>August 2011:</b>	Beginn eines dreimonatigen Praktikums als Online-Redakteur im Ressort Sport beim Kurier.